

**TOP 20 GREATEST
COMIC BOOK FILMS**

**ALI & AVA
INTERVIEWS**

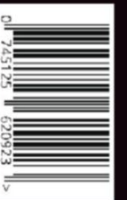
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WELCOME FROM THE EDITORS

W

elcome to the latest issue. With the release of a new *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* film we look at the franchise and the

obsession with horror sequels. As well as looking at horror sequels we also take a look at the current trend of nostalgia and ask if it's helping or hindering the movies.

With the big release of *The Batman*, this month's list sees the team choose their top 20 comic book films, a look at the new Batman, Robert Pattinson's career and whether the new Batman needs the Joker yet.

Continuing with the comic book theme we also look at what we know about the latest Marvel epic *Dr. Strange in the Multiverse of Madness*.

There's more features, interviews, reviews, previews and a quiz. We hope you enjoy.

DAVID GARLICK
@DGfilmhounds

H

ello, we're excited to see you holding another cracking, brand-new issue of FilmHounds Magazine. This month, we dive

deep into all things Batman as we eagerly wait for the release of *The Batman*. We've also been chatting to Evangeline Lilly about her film *South of Heaven* and I caught up with director Clio Barnard and the stars of *Ali & Ava* to talk about the very unique social-realism musical. We also ranked the top 20 comic book films and there are some bangers in there, so please give that a read and share your thoughts with us online.

We can't begin to thank you for all your support for the magazine and our superb writers. We're truly trying to make a difference and couldn't do it without you. Follow us on all socials to get the latest and we'll see you in the next issue!

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FILMHOUNDS

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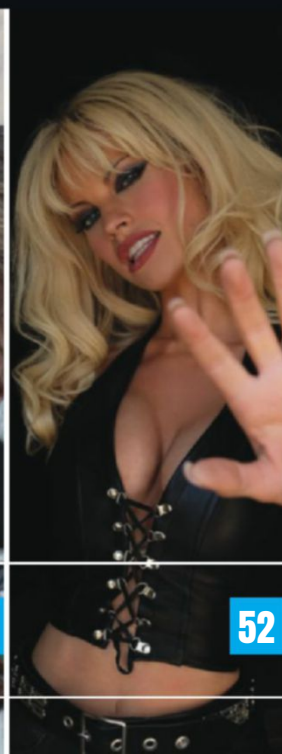
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Like Looking In A Mirror, Only Not – When People Play Themselves On-Screen

W

e've seen him play soldiers, assassins, hard-edged cops, a treasure hunter, a Marvel

superhero, and he has a portrayal of Dracula about to go before cameras. But soon, we'll see Nicolas Cage like we have never seen him before: as himself.

Well, a version of himself anyway. Yes, Cage will next be taking to our screens in *The Unbearable Weight Of Massive Talent*, becoming the latest actor to put his ego on the line in service of an exaggerated fashion of himself. It looks to be Cage like we've never seen him before, offering more Cage for your buck than anything else he has done across his vast filmography.

In the film, a debt-ridden Cage accepts a million dollar offer to

attend the party of a rich mega fan, played by Pedro Pascal. He's a fanboy to the extreme, even housing a museum of Cage memorabilia, complete with uncanny waxworks and the dual golden pistols from *Face/Off*. There is a catch however, this superfan is also a notorious drug lord, and before long Cage is forced down a wild and crazy path where he is forced to face the roles of his past and reflect on the weight of his legacy, and of course his massive talent.

Directed by Tom Gormican, *The Unbearable Weight of Massive Talent* also stars Tiffany Haddish, Sharon Horgan, Lily Sheen, Jacob Scipio, Ike Barinholtz, Neil Patrick Harris and Paco León.

It is a deliciously metaphysical concept that seems like a perfect fit for Cage's eccentric star persona, with the trailer promising an oddball adventure set to show Cage as both an anxiety riddled movie

star and completely unhinged all at once. Now if that doesn't sound like a perfect celebration of all things Cage, I don't know what is.

Cage joins a long line of performers who have been willing to poke fun at their own personas - or in some cases feed their ego and star image - by portraying themselves on screen in service of a meta-narrative, ranging from brief cameo appearances to lead roles. To celebrate Cage's dive into the metaphysical, we take a look back at some of the most famous examples of actors playing themselves on screen in major roles, where the line between performer and character becomes blurred and in some cases disappears entirely; it's like looking in a mirror, only not.

**THE BEATLES - A HARD
DAY'S NIGHT (1964) &
HELP! (1965)**



WORDS: ANDREW GAUDION

Photo Credit: Katalin Vermes/Lionsgate; © 2021 Lionsgate

The Beatles-starring films of the 60's directed by Richard Lester remain some of the most influential pieces of British pop culture to ever be committed to screen. Doubling down on the decade's Beatlemania, both *A Hard Day's Night* and *Help* (but particularly the former) are highly energetic, inventive and exhilarating comedies with a personality that comes directly from the Fab Four's camaraderie.

Lester's kaleidoscopic visuals and off-beat editing techniques also make for a pretty exhilarating adventure, particularly in the case of *A Hard Day's Night*, as the boisterous editing and hand held camera work put you right in the midst of Beatlemania.

While fans have become even more acquainted with Paul, John, George and Ringo in Jackson's *Get Back* docu-series in recent months, there's nothing that can

quite match the sense of mania in their 60's movies to truly express the magnitude of the group's popularity. It also cannot be stressed how influential Lester's films remain to this day, from the similar music group based movies from the likes of The Monkees, Gerry and the Pacemakers, the Spice Girls and Tenacious D to the comedic stylings of spoofs like *This Is Spinal Tap*.

ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER - LAST ACTION HERO (1993)

John McTiernan's *Last Action Hero* may not have been a box-office smash upon release - a certain Dino attraction got more bums in seats that summer - but it has gone on to have a beloved cult following - and it's not hard to see why.

Arnold Schwarzenegger stars as both himself and his latest action

hero Jack Slater, who young fan Danny gets to meet in the flesh when he gets his hands on a magic movie ticket that transports him into the world of the latest Jack Slater action movie. What follows is a madcap satire of action movie tropes, but what is even more satisfying is Schwarzenegger's well calibrated comic performance.

The biggest action star even at the time, Arnie shows a great willingness to poke fun at his own star image, and there's something very humorous about the way he plays Slater's existential crisis as he discovers he is a character in a movie, particularly when he comes face to face with the 'real' Schwarzenegger in the film's final act.

MICHAEL JORDAN AND LEBRON JAMES - SPACE JAM (1996) AND SPACE

JAM: A NEW LEGACY (2021)

Much more an exercise in brand management than other titles on this list, the *Space Jam* movies on the surface are a very bizarre combination: the biggest basketball stars in the world and the Looney Tunes.

The original had a narrative much more entwined with the reality of the sports star at its centre, with the film explaining that Jordan's decision to return to Basketball and the Chicago Bulls was thanks to inspiration of Bugs, Daffy and co after they recruit him to help them defeat a race of aliens threatening them with enslavement as an attraction at an amusement park. Jordan himself is no actor, but for those that grew up with it, *Space Jam* remains a nostalgic and oh-so-very-90's treat that uses the public image of Jordan to comical effect.

Its belated sequel - which features LeBron James instead - is barely about the public image of James. It's much more focused on Warner Bros using the film as an excuse to roll out their IP catalogue of characters from movies to TV and video games. The fact that LeBron James could be anybody means it has nowhere near the sense of fun the much more self-aware original has, quickly becoming a headache of over-crowded CG, with little interest in exploring the personality of one of the world's biggest sports stars.

HOWARD STERN - PRIVATE PARTS (1997)

Howard Stern was and continues to be one of the most listened to radio personalities in the United States, known for his occasionally

brash comedic stylings but incredibly active interview techniques. Millions upon millions continue to turn into this show, as well as buy his memoirs.

The first of those three memoirs, 1993's *Private Parts*, went on to form the basis of his biopic, in which Stern plays himself in the account of his own rise to fame. When it comes to stroking egos, *Private Parts* is (perhaps fittingly) the most guilty of it among this list, and not just because it's Stern playing itself in a narrative about how good he is and what he does.

It's hard to take any of the facts here at face value here, but it is undeniably entertaining with a strong sense of humour that proves to be a pretty pure distillation of the kind of man Howard Stern is, if hardly an objective take on the larger than life figure. He may not always be likeable, but this is a pretty decent litmus test for whether or not Stern is someone you would find palatable or not as he plays up his persona to often funny, sometimes even moving effect.

JOHN MALKOVICH - BEING JOHN MALKOVICH (1999)

When struggling puppeteer Craig Schwartz (John Cusack) discovers a portal in a New York office building, he could never guess where it leads: into the mind of Hollywood actor John Malkovich. Spike Jonze's surreal fantasy from one of Charlie Kaufman's first screenplays is an off-kilter, very funny and oddball exploration of star persona and the often crippling sensation of a lack of fulfilment.

It is a highly original and imaginative concept brought to eccentric life by Jonze's direction and a wildly engaged cast, from

Cusack to a wonderful Cameron Diaz and an exceptionally game John Malkovich. It is often impossible to predict just where this mind-warping comedy will go next, with one sequence in which Malkovich goes into his own brain standing as one of the most comically unnerving sequences put to celluloid.

BRUCE CAMPBELL - MY NAME IS BRUCE (2007)

Bruce Campbell will always be known as Ash from *The Evil Dead* franchise. It is a character he has revisited countless times since the original 1981 movie from Sam Raimi, both on screen and in various other pieces of multimedia, from comic books to video games and a TV show. So, it would make sense that the film in which Campbell plays himself should be so entwined with the chainsaw wielding sugar-giving deadite busting hero from Raimi's trilogy.

In the comedy horror *My Name is Bruce*, the 'faux Campbell' is a B-movie star who is kidnapped by a fan who has unwittingly unleashed the Chinese god of the dead, and is hoping his movie hero will be able to assist them in reversing the mistake.

It's a very *Three Amigos/Galaxy Quest* set up, one which throws the actor into a situation where he is called upon to be the kind of hero he so often plays, yet proves to be woefully inept at answering the call. It's certainly not as successful as those two efforts, as despite a more than game Campbell willfully poking fun at his own B-movie actor reputation, the film is a little short of inspired jokes or thrills, slightly hampered by a limited budget while never quite embracing the silliness its star is so willing to indulge in.



JEAN-CLAUDE VAN DAMME - JCVD (2008)

If you're going to watch any of these films in preparation for Nic Cage's own deconstruction of his star image then may I stress it be *JCVD*, the action drama with an award worthy performance from Jean-Claude Van Damme at its centre.

The film shows Van Damme as a washed out and down on his luck actor, broke, out of work and estranged from his ex-wife and daughter. He returns home to Brussels where one day he is taken hostage among with the customers of a Post Office; is this the moment where Van Damme can become a real hero and reclaim his glory?

What sounds like the setup for a kick-ass self-aware action flick never once plays how you would expect it to. It often plays with genre expectation and instead of an action star becoming a real hero, it is more about a man at the end of his tether, desperate for something to go right, often putting

himself and others in more danger rather than ever taking control of both the situation in the post office or his own life.

Van Damme himself is exceptional, incredibly raw and displaying a side of himself hitherto unknown. In one quite startling moment, he breaks the fourth wall to deliver a monologue about his own failings and anxieties that rings with a genuine sense of pain and honesty. An overlooked gem, and a high point when it comes to actors examining themselves on screen.

PRETTY MUCH THE WHOLE CAST - THIS IS THE END (2013)

In the stoner comedies that have come to make up the output of his Point Grey productions company, it can sometimes be hard to separate Seth Rogen from a number of the characters that he plays, given his open easy-going stoner public persona. So it is unsurprising then that he and many of his pals - including Jay Baruchel, Jonah Hill, Danny McBride and James Franco

- would remove the middle man at some point.

This Is The End sees the famous apes all having to face the rapture, as many are left behind to face the post-apocalyptic landscape as civilization crumbles around them. Some of them are more exaggerated than others - Jonah Hill's sycophantic passive aggression is a highlight - but at its core there's quite a sweet story of friendship inspired by a genuine rift between Seth and Jay during their early days in Hollywood.

Everyone involved seems to be having a ball at their own expense, with a number of memorable cameos dotted throughout as some of Hollywood's funniest people revel in making themselves the butt of the joke. While never quite as creatively meta as some films on this list, *This Is The End* is certainly one of the most fun, one where there is very little ego on display and a fun high concept at its core. And anything that ends with a group dance with the real Backstreet Boys is ok by my book. **B**

PREVIEW



Robert Eggers is back for his third feature after his cult status was achieved with his first two films; *The Witch* and *The Lighthouse*. However, Eggers has moved from the highly acclaimed studio A24 to Universal, bringing audiences a story of vengeance in the time of the Vikings. In a film that is sure to please fans of the recent *Assassin's Creed: Valhalla*, Eggers brings us an all star cast including Alexander Skarsgård, Ethan Hawke, Nicole Kidman, Anya Taylor Joy, Willem Dafoe, Claes Bang (of *Dracula* fame) and even Björk! The action and drama is sure to be an audience and critics pleaser.

- Freddie Deighton

THE NORTHMAN

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att Reeves' *The Batman* has become one of the most hotly anticipated 2022

releases, sporting a fan-favourite cast, extended runtime and a perfectly dark tone if the trailers are anything to go by. Worlds apart from 1966's *Batman: The Movie*, the dark knight has adopted (no pun intended) a far more complex persona, with subsequent iterations skirting increasingly closer to a fractured psyche; one which matches his backstory and the life of a vigilante in Gotham, the most corrupt and sordid of cities. If we conveniently misremember the Schumacher films, it doesn't take the world's greatest detective to discern that Batman is one of the most bankable and revered heroes. Therefore, let's hope Pattinson and Reeves blow it out of park this year so we are

treated to further instalments, further stylised bleakness and further villains.

To celebrate the upcoming release of *The Batman*, the team at Filmhounds have scrapped and scraped to bring you the Top 20 Comic Book Movies of all time. From nearly 100 suggestions, we spliced the outsiders and cut the fat to bring you the definitive collection, joint by only one rule; they must have been adapted (if not loosely) from a comic book, graphic novel or manga. Speaking of Batman, the caped crusader himself unsurprisingly makes the list 5 times, proving that quality accompanies the quantity of his various outings. Throw in a few spots for the world's mightiest heroes, a friendly neighbourhood webslinger and the last son of Krypton, and you have a bona fide banger of a list. We pay homage to the great nerd writers of our time, from the pioneers Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, late

greats Stan Lee and Jack Kirby, world changers Bob Kane and Bill Finger, cult classic giants Frank Miller and Bryan Lee O'Malley, unsung heroes Garon Tsuchiya and Jacques Lob, and every great contributing writer or illustrator in between.

We have these great minds to thank for laying the framework for so much of what we enjoy in cinema today, despite what some auteurs may argue. Now a billion-dollar business and cultural phenom, the world of comic book movies is not going anywhere anytime soon, so rejoice with us in remembering the trailblazers of the 20th century, the instant modern classics and the cult hits which have since gained huge popularity. We hope you enjoy our top 20 entries, comprised of all the spandex-clad, cowl-hidden, webbed-menace, galaxy-defending bunch of A-holes that you could dream of. - **Dave Manson**



20

X-MEN: DAYS OF FUTURE PAST

Spider-Man: No Way Home may be taking the box-office by storm with its multiple dimensions plotline, but it can't quite claim it as a unique selling point. Back in 2014, another Marvel property, *X-Men*, got there first with *Days of Future Past*, which brought together the two different *X-Men* timelines in a film that felt very dissimilar to the ones that came before.

Coming in at 20 on our countdown, *Days of Future Past* is a complex and dense movie, with various characters and personalities vying for attention, but with a strong emotional current flowing through it. The heroes (and villains) who populate the story are facing very real danger, as Peter Dinklage's superbly villainous Bolivar Trask sends mutant hunting sentinels after the last remaining members of the team. Unlike the earlier *X-Men* films, there's a very real sense that some may not survive.

At the centre of the film is Hugh Jackman, who brings depth and gravitas to his portrayal of Wolverine, hinting at what would come later in *Logan* (2017). Alongside him, James McAvoy and Michael Fassbender are on fine form as the 70s versions of Professor X and Magneto, while there's great supporting work from Jennifer Lawrence, Dinklage, Nicholas Hoult, Evan Peters, Halle Berry and legends Ian McKellen and Patrick Stewart. The action sequences are well-directed and strongly crafted and there's plenty of goosebump moments.

Days of Future Past isn't as forceful or ground-breaking as other comic book movies, but its strong plot, excellent performances and genuine human drama, coupled with some sly humour and an ending that undoes the bad taste left by *X-Men: The Last Stand* provide a rich tapestry, one that gives the film its hugely deserving, if underrated, reputation. - **Callum Barrington**

19

BLACK PANTHER

The wider Marvel Cinematic Universe has changed cinema forever but none of the individual entries really made a lasting cultural impact. That was until T'Challa, after making his debut in *Captain America: Civil War*, starred in his first solo outing. Even before the film's release, the impact of seeing a primarily Black cast in a tentpole superhero movie could be felt from mainstream audiences as well as Marvel fans. During the film's marketing, *Black Panther* become the most tweeted-about movie of all time and pre-sale tickets went through the roof. And what of the impact when it finally hit the big screen? It grossed \$1.3 billion worldwide, destroying numerous box office records, and won three academy awards - but most importantly it generated a huge response from audiences all over the world.

A flood of videos on social media showed lively screenings in the multiplexes, audiences walking out singing and dancing, and children dressing up as their favourite characters from the movie. Black audiences finally saw themselves on screen, and in a massively successful Marvel film no less. But *Black Panther* didn't just visually represent African and African-American culture but actively addressed themes of colonialism, race and identity.

The film itself sees T'Challa tested as both the *Black Panther* and the king of Wakanda, as a dangerous enemy challenges him for what he stands for. The world finally saw the glorious nation of Wakanda and the Afrofuturism aesthetic, but tonally at times it felt like a Shakespearean epic and other times a slick James Bond flick. Director Ryan Coogler and the crew juggle a lot, but it all comes together in an exhilarating and emotional adventure.

The MCU forever changed blockbuster cinema, but *Black Panther* aimed bigger and ignited conversation around diversity and representation on screen to change the medium itself.

- **Gavin Spoors**



18 THE SUICIDE SQUAD

James Gunn's softcore re-boot is the only DCEU project to make this list, and unlike the heavy studio interference which afflicted its predecessor, *The Suicide Squad* enjoys a completely uninhibited approach. It combines a host of returning faces like Robbie (Harley Quinn), Kinnaman (Rick Flag) and Davis (Amanda Waller) with fresh blood and revered Gunn alum. What ensues is a gratuitous, barbaric, beautiful mess the likes of which Gunn has built a career on.

The narrative is suitably ridiculous: a task force, our *Suicide Squad*, is sent to the fictional island nation of Corto Maltese to eliminate all traces of a giant galactic starfish, Starro the Conqueror. It doesn't force an Enchantress love story on the viewer, nor it is comprised of a single colour-scheme throughout, but instead provides a glorious platform for the brainchild of a bona fide comic-book aficionado to unfurl. Unfortunately, its narrative success wasn't matched at the box office, but with the arrival of the offshoot smash-hit series *Peacemaker*, fans can rejoice in the knowledge that these characters will persist in the growing lore.

Similar to previous Gunn projects, the ironically unsung heroes are the characters with limited dialogue and the most potent laughs. Dastmalchian's Polka-Dot Man and Stallone's King Shark are among the major highlights, providing an R-rated alternative to similarly muted 'heroes' Drax the Destroyer and Groot. The shot alone of King Shark vertically bisecting a guard is both transcendently beautiful and mortifyingly horrific. Add to that a fantastically shot Harley escape sequence, a gorgeously choreographed fight reflected on *Peacekeeper's* helmet and a Taika Waititi cameo, the result is a comic book movie unlike any other which breaks the solemn DCEU mould but loses absolutely no character. – **Dave Manson**



17 BATMAN (1989)

The second feature film for DC's Dark Knight introduced audiences to the real Batman; dark, broody, exciting and dangerous (We still love you, Adam West!). Director Tim Burton managed to deliver on all points mixed with his trademark blend of gothic surrealism and dark humour. Michael Keaton embodies an everyday quality to his Bruce Wayne. He's not tormented and broken like modern interpretations but keeps his grief and reservations inside to fuel his quest. He ticks all the boxes and certainly proved to doubters he could convey both billionaire playboy and crime fighter. It's Jack Nicholson as the Joker who steals the show, bringing an eccentric, psychotic and deadly essence to the character never seen before. Nicholson has a devilish glint in his eye at all times and he acts the fool perfectly, but never leaves doubt that he kills for pleasure and is 100% dangerous.

Looking far more like a film noir than most others, it's a timeless film that could be set in the 50s or modern day thanks to Burton's visual style like trilbies and trench coats for the majority of the male cast and smoke rising from the manholes between modern, industrial looking skyscrapers. It's a Gotham City you can't really place in time or match to any other location. It's a character in itself. The set design is very faithful to the comics as well as the costume and make-up for our hero and villain with Batman a dark vigilante and the Joker a camp, deadly adversary. It's a visually stunning comic-book adaptation, introducing Batman to new generations, with Keaton helping re-invent the Dark Knight for the big screen. – **Chris Gelderd**



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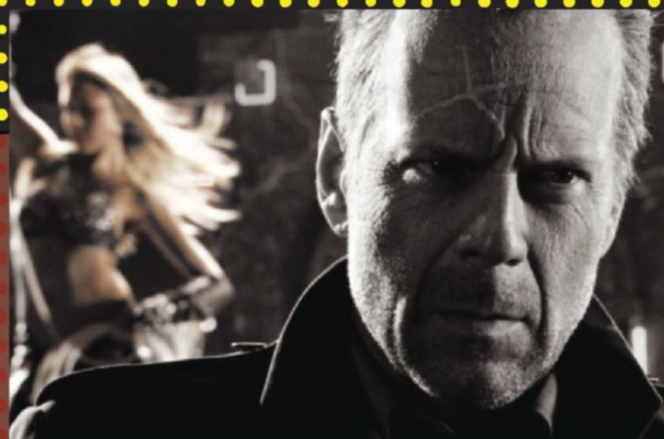
OLDBOY

To state the obvious, we're not talking about the 2013 American version but Park Chan-wook's loose adaptation of the original Japanese manga. This neo-noir thriller may have gained popularity for its shocking moments – incestual sex, an octopus being eaten alive, tongues being cut off – but it's remained a classic thanks to the compelling, tragic narrative.

Oldboy follows Oh Dae-su (Choi Min-sik), a man imprisoned for fifteen years without knowing who his captor is and what their motive was. When released, Dae-su is fuelled by vengeance and attempts to unravel the mystery – and it's here where the similarities between the manga and the film stop. The twists and turns throughout the story are deliciously horrifying but they're not played for pure shock value. Every violent act unveils who Dae-su is: a broken, animalistic man who has lost his humanity, a nobody who will do anything to feel alive again but also to exact revenge.

Of course, we can't talk about how *Oldboy* is a modern classic without mentioning the corridor fight. Dae-su fends off multiple assailants in one continuous take, but whilst it's technically impressive the camera work is utilised to focus on the outstanding choreography. Chan-wook's emphasis on realism only heightens the gritty brutality and makes this fight scene one of the best we've ever seen on screen.

Even with such an incredible filmography that includes *Stoker* and *The Handmaiden*, Park Chan-wook will always be known as the twisted genius that introduced *Oldboy* to the world. You'd be forgiven too for not realising that this is an adaptation – proving just how visionary Chan-wook is. – **Gavin Spoor**



15

SIN CITY

From the edgy soundtrack to the unusually filmed dark underbelly of crime and everything dangerous, *Sin City's* trailer when it was released promised something very different. This wasn't just a film that wanted to push the boundaries in terms of story, based on the cult source material; it felt like a new breed of action and film noir collided into an atmospheric as hell anthology film. With Robert Rodriguez at the helm the film held up its end of this promise with something we hadn't seen before. With no screen-writing credit, just simply, 'based on the graphic novels by Frank Miller', the film includes three stories bookended by a short, split in two. The film follows several characters that inhabit Basin City, sometimes crossing over into each other's way. It features an ex-con taking revenge on those who killed his one-night stand, a cop who takes a fall to save a young girl from a disturbing wealthy predator and a private eye who teams up with the prostitutes of Old Town to fight off the mob. Wanting to stay faithful to the novels, Rodriguez co-directed with Frank Miller himself, (as well as a guest directing spot for Quentin Tarantino) creating a translation rather than an adaption. Ever the innovator, Rodriguez shot the entire film on greenscreen, allowing him to start shooting even before cast members were locked in and simply adding in actors in post-production. This gave him the freedom to create something unique and a film like no other. It wasn't just the violent and hard-boiled crime drama with a twist that made *Sin City* a film to remember, but also it went on to influence other filmmakers for better or for worse. – **Katie Hogan**

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14 THE DARK KNIGHT RISES

Comic Book movie fans will often hail *Avengers: Endgame* as the most epic of the bunch and that's most probably the case but *The Dark Knight Rises* truly defined what it means to be an EPIC Comic Book Movie. This film had an impossible task, firstly it had to conclude one of the greatest superhero trilogies of all time, but it also had to be the follow up to one of the most critically acclaimed and financially successful films ever, not just in the realms of the superhero genre. And did it succeed? There are some naysayers across the internet that would have you believe that this is one of the worst films Christopher Nolan has directed. However, true Batman fans know this to be a supreme achievement in cape clad cinema. It does have its minor plot holes here and there admittedly and surely it would have been more sensible for John Blake to be called Dick Grayson instead of having a bit of a weird tease that doesn't really make much sense. These though are very much nitpicks.

The Dark Knight Rises gave Christian Bale's iconic take on the caped crusader the emotional and epic send-off he deserved, and it also introduced us to one of the most quotable and mimic-able villains in cinematic history with Tom Hardy's Bane. Audiences still haven't recovered from the scene where Batman finally meets his physical match and is beaten to a pulp in front of a baying mob of mercenaries. This was a film where the Dark Knight did indeed rise from the ashes to bring hope to his city and fear to those that decide to terrorise it. *The Dark Knight Rises* truly is The Return of the King of the Batman cinematic mythos. – **Freddie Deighton**



13 SUPERMAN: THE MOVIE

The film that made the world believe a man could fly. Christopher Reeve brings our Superman/Clark Kent to life. It's nothing but joyous seeing his 6ft 4 frame bumble and stammer along as Clark, wary of his glasses sliding down his nose and struggling to open bottled water, when in the next frame he swells as Superman with confidence, heroism and a steel-jawed resolve. There has never been, and never will be, a more faithful portrayal of the iconic hero. Stellar supporting cast are present in the guise of veterans Marlon Brando and Gene Hackman, lending their pulling power to important roles of Jor-El and Lex Luthor.

It also features Margot Kidder, Valerie Perrine, Jackie Cooper and even Terence Stamp foreshadowing his role in the sequel *Superman II*. From matte paintings, practical rigging, green screen, miniatures, forced camera perspective... this is the original guide to making blockbuster films without tapping on a keyboard and using a mouse to create CGI worlds and heroes. It takes its time to tell an origin story. We spend 50 minutes with the Kryptonians and the Kents as Clark grows. Then, we go well into the hour until we see Superman himself in full glory with the THAT fanfare. Nothing is rushed. Nothing is glossed over. It's a template many have used and owe to this film in doing so. The soundtrack is iconic and could narrate the film without a script. It will live on as the defining superhero theme, thanks to composer John Williams. Richard Donner's *Superman: The Movie* tells a fantastical story of hope, heroism and innocence, something often lost in today's superhero movie market.

– **Chris Gelderd**



12

GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY

Marvel has often been accused of churning out films that look and feel exactly the same, with a boring, bland visual palette and a lack of humour. Sure, there have been exceptions but only after James Gunn's *Guardians of the Galaxy* from 2014. *Guardians* walked so that s could run and Gunn's wild and fresh take on the otherwise traditional narrative remains one of the best Marvel films to date.

Following a ragtag team of morally ambiguous, yet curiously sweet characters, *Guardians* was something new and fresh. Gunn's script was full of smart one-liners and that soundtrack made a beeline for our brains and got stuck there. Who hasn't had Hooked On A Feeling stuck in their head since 2014? Chris Pratt was lovable as Star Lord, but it was Vin Diesel's Groot and Bradley Cooper's Rocket who stole the hearts of audiences and critics alike. The talking, gun-loving raccoon and its strange tree companion proved to form the film's emotional core and ever since the film premiered, we would die for Rocket and Groot.

Guardians was bright, colourful and weird but its central message of coming together in the face of hardship was something to be cherished. Gunn was in total control of all elements of the film; this was a James Gunn movie, not a Kevin Feige one. The action scenes were exhilarating and while *Guardians* arguably buried Lee Pace under too much makeup as the film's antagonist Ronan the Accuser, the film's finale was pitch perfect and had us crying, laughing and obviously, dancing. We are Groot.

– Maria Lattila



11

SNOWPIERCER

Bong Joon-ho's historic sweep at the Academy Awards felt like a huge victory for the director, not just overcoming the one-inch barrier bias that so many have endured, not just winning the top prizes for a film as weird as *Parasite* was, but also as it stood as a huge f-you to Harvey Weinstein. When his 2013 English Language debut got royally messed around by the former kingpin - barely getting a release in the US, no distribution in Europe until years later – it was all because director Bong made a singular vision.

Snowpiercer is a pretty loose adaptation of the French comic book, here a train acts as the last home of what remains of humanity. The world has been plunged into an eternal ice age and those at the front of the massive, ever moving train live in luxury while those at the tail end live in abject squalor, eating a weird jelly bar. Chris Evans' tail dweller Curtis eventually decides enough is enough and with a band of other tail-folk (Octavia Spencer, Jamie Bell, John Hurt, Song Kang-ho), take bureaucrat Mason (Tilda Swinton) hostage and head to confront the train's driver, founder and leader Wilfred (Ed Harris).

Director Bong fuses biting satire and social commentary with his unique blend of gross-out humour (bug eating, drug addiction, toilets) with knuckle crunching action for a film that has both big brains and big brawn to spare. Evans carries the film from silent-but-strong hero to his final moments dropping painful truths on the audience. There are no easy answers to the film, but Bong delivers action thriller of unusual intelligence that has grown in stature and importance in the near decade since its lead producer tried to bury it. –

Paul Klein



10 BATMAN RETURNS

Dark, twisted, weird, but, most of all, entertaining. Tim Burton and *Batman Returns* are almost one and the same. After the enormous success of 1989's *Batman*, Burton pushed all those qualities even further in a film that proved too much for some critics and audience members. For others, *Returns* gave another true taste of the Dark Knight's freaky world, one inhabited by deformed, birdlike orphans and psychotic, feline women. As with all his misunderstood outcasts, Burton mines tragedy out of both the Penguin and Catwoman's stories. Both Oswald Cobblepot and Selina Kyle are afflicted with loneliness and overcome with the need for revenge. Under gruesome prosthetics, Danny DeVito turns from pitiful to deplorable on a dime, trading in Cobblepot's usual crime-boss decorum for wild eyes and animalistic grunting. While DeVito oozes bile, Michelle Pfeiffer oozes dangerous sex appeal as the unhinged Catwoman, seeking revenge against her employer-turned-murderer Max Shreck (a wonderfully wigged Christopher Walken). While Catwoman fights Batman, Selina falls for Bruce Wayne (Michael Keaton) in a warped relationship that you can't help but root for. In another film, these two damaged souls would find happiness together, but Gotham City is no place for fairytale endings. *Batman Returns* is a truly unforgettable film, filled with characters and moments that are difficult to shake off. Who hasn't winced as an alley's worth of cats nibble at Selina's fingertips, or as the Penguin viciously takes a bite of someone's nose? Penguin armies parade around the streets, poodles blow up shopfronts, and Danny DeVito rides around on a giant rubber duck. There is much to value in the movie itself, but the fact we're never likely to see another Batman film like it? That makes it priceless. – **Scott Zissou Walkinshaw**

9

CAPTAIN AMERICA: THE WINTER SOLDIER

The Russo Brothers' first MCU venture is also comfortably its best solo feature. As a standalone film it is phenomenal, sporting some of the most impressively crafted sequences in the universe, but with wider implications that also resonate. It sets up Rogers' discontent with the current establishment before *Civil War*, but also ties in and reflects poignantly on the relationships which underpinned *The First Avenger*. As Rogers and Fury begin to connect, Harry James plays on the radio, which is heard again during the final scene of *Endgame* as we observe Rogers reconnect with the person he loves the most. Touches like this are why the Russos were tasked with landing the most difficult climax in cinematic history.

Of the connections in Captain's sequel, the most beautifully advanced is that between Rogers and the Winter Soldier himself. The Winter Soldier is built from an enigma to prisoner to friend succinctly, and stands out as a dangerous foe to Cap'n and new ally Sam Wilson (Mackie). Herein lies the film's greatest strength, its ensemble of magnificent villains. The insidious Hydra looms within SHIELD, led by the malevolent Alexander Pierce (Redford), who dominates every scene, and a pair of suitably over-the-top henchmen played by Frank Grillo and Callan Mulvey.

Everything clicks and everyone brings their A-game. Fury has his most dominant outing, Romanov is at her smarmiest and Rogers himself comes into his own as the Shielded Avenger. Whether he's tussling with a UFC fighter on a ship, battling Bucky in an immaculately choreographed road duel or simply dismantling henchmen on aircraft carriers, the character is undoubtedly cemented as a hero. The action spectacles will keep you coming back, but to fully enjoy this film please do as Nick Fury advises and: 'Keep both eyes open!' – **Dave Manson**



8

AVENGERS: INFINITY WAR

You just know the film is going to hit hard when the usual Marvel Studios logo doesn't open with the regular blasting fanfare. Then Heimdall and Loki get brutally murdered by Thanos in the opening scene and you know that this is going to be a Marvel villain that means business and isn't going to mess around.

Infinity War moves along at breakneck pace as Thanos starts collecting the infinity stones and it's a film that really has it all. For a movie with so many main characters to juggle, the Russo brothers handle them all perfectly and whilst no one character gets a huge amount of screen time, no one feels entirely left out. There's plenty of action as we finally get to watch the Guardians of the Galaxy team up with the Avengers, with Thor's arrival in Wakanda with Rocket and Groot being a particular highlight.

It is of course the ending that sticks with you though as Thanos finally obtains all six stones and snaps his fingers, wiping half of all life out of existence. Even though it was fairly clear that all these deaths probably wouldn't be permanent, it was still a shock to see these characters die and for the film to end there. One of the biggest and boldest crossover events of all time, *Avengers: Infinity War* is well deserving of its spot as one of the greatest ever comic book films not least because of how remarkably it balances its huge number of characters. – **Jed Wagman**

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7

BATMAN BEGINS

As *The Dark Knight* is a perfect film, no questions asked, people often forget that it's a sequel. It's quite simple really: *Batman Begins* walked so *The Dark Knight* could run. Christopher Nolan achieved the impossible with his premiere super-hero film; he brought Batman back from the neon soaked grave he'd been left in by Joel Schumacher and his campy assault on one of comic books' darkest heroes.

Batman Begins was the first Batman film to truly understand who Batman is - it was the first live-action Batman film to actually be about Batman. Tim Burton's *Batman*, while it does have its fans, was written by someone who had no knowledge of the character and simply made Bruce Wayne's alter ego darker than the previous Adam West interpretation without actually giving him his character. Christian Bale's first go around underneath the cowl was a perfect character study in what it takes for a man to become a symbol of fear and vengeance. The film also gave us two seriously underrated villains in Liam Neeson's Ra's al Ghul and Cillian Murphy's Scarecrow - two villains that had never been seen on the big screen before but were iconic in the world of comics.

Batman Begins is clearly still as influential as it was back in the 2000s as Matt Reeves is taking a leaf out of Nolan's book when it comes to making Gotham itself a character rather than just filming in Chicago and New York and calling it a day - which is sadly what Nolan did with the latter two of his trilogy. – **Freddie Deighton**

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6

LOGAN

James Mangold shook up the X-Men formula with his 2017 take on the adamantium clad anti-hero. Hugh Jackman's last go as Wolverine owes more to the western than any smash 'em up superhero romp with Logan and Patrick Stewart's Charles on the run from cybernetic mercenaries and a sinister company along with near-mute clone Laura (Dafne Keen). Mangold takes his time with the story, letting revelations and character beats unfold gracefully while also kicking you full force with bloody splattered action. With any film in the series it's the subtext that really works, watching Logan and Charles grappling with their failing super powers and a legacy of violence.

Logan's Academy Award nominated for Best Adapted Screenplay shows the level of care and adult themes put into the story, that despite some enjoyable b-movie gore, the film is more about ideas and character. As a swansong for one of cinemas most bankable heroes and the role that made Jackman a household name, both he and Mangold did the comic book world proud. By the film's end there is a sense of finality to the entire series, despite three more films in the franchise following it, *Logan* feels like an appropriate full stop on the original Marvel Movie-verse, with a solemn moment of contemplation and a grave marker turned to make an X, Mangold transcends the trappings of the genre for what might just be the pinnacle of superhero comic book storytelling.

– Paul Klein

5

SPIDER-MAN: INTO THE SPIDER-VERSE

If I say the word "sunflower", what comes to mind? You might think of the flower, all yellow and standing tall, or if you're like us, a bunch of film obsessed individuals, you'll immediately think of the beginning of *Spider-Man: Into The Spider-Verse* and the scene that introduces us to Miles Morales.

Miles is, of course, Spider-Man, or at least he will be in this mind-bending animated outing for everyone's favourite webslinger. Many consider *Spider-Verse* the best ever Spider-Man film or even the best ever animated film and those people have a point. *Spider-Verse* is innovative, fun and brilliantly utilises animation as its medium of choice. We often describe the animation as beautiful when we talk about the latest Pixar film and we often mean things like the attention to detail or the shot composition, but *Spider-Verse* really takes this to another level.

Directors Bob Persichetti, Peter Ramsey and Rodney Rothman, who won an Oscar for the film, create a meta-layer in the film by making it look like a comic book but it never becomes a gimmick, simply an artistic tool of expression and a very good one at that. If you've already suspended our disbelief, why not push it further to create something completely unique?

The story concerns multiple different Spider-Beings coming together in Miles' dimension and a large portion of the film's fun comes from seeing these different Spideys interacting and ultimately working together. Their dynamic is fun and breezy, but there is also a slightly tragic and sad undercurrent to *Spider-Verse*, creating a rich and powerful viewing experience, ultimately making *Spider-Man: Into The Spider-Verse* one of the best comic book movies. – Maria Lattila



4

SCOTT PILGRIM VS THE WORLD

For fans of the six volumed story about a slacker, bass guitarist who has to fight the girl of his dreams' deadly exes in order to win her heart, seeing a live adaptation might not have worked. However, in the right hands, these being Edgar Wright's, the film could capture the quirkiness and cross media appeal, incorporating gaming visuals and homages from the actual comic. Ultimately, *Scott Pilgrim* was not a commercial success, but it was favoured by critics (mostly) and is now considered a cult hit.

When accepting that everything in the story is the reality and this is the world these characters live in, the film instantly becomes more enjoyable. With vegan police, people turning into coins when punched, hidden gigantic hammers, various battle of the bands scenes and a flaming sword being pulled from the hero's chest, not to mention seven, very eccentric self-proclaimed evil exes, there is a fun alternative to the rest of the comic book movies being made. The humour of the film has that Edgar Wright touch, whose co-writing with Michael Bacall, quick edits and excellent comedic timing just makes the film.

Set to a very catchy and well curated soundtrack with songs being sung by characters in the film, there is nothing that really lets this film down, except maybe that alternative ending that thankfully was changed to honour the original comic book. The fact that Scott Pilgrim is the 'hero' of the story and Ramona his heroine, he is no hero. He's just a guy who loves a girl and occasionally plays in a band, Sex Bob-Omb, and is willing to fight for it all. – **Katie Hogan**



3

AVENGERS: ENDGAME

Films like *Avengers: Endgame* don't come around very often. Over ten years and more than twenty films in the making, this really is the endgame. After watching many of our favourite heroes such as Spider-Man and Black Panther turn to dust only a year earlier in *Infinity War*, the earth's mightiest heroes are at their lowest now and have to do whatever it takes to restore the world to what it was.

Despite *Infinity War* having one of the most shocking endings of any film in recent memory, *Endgame* opens by piling on even more shockers. Not only does Thanos get decapitated in the opening twenty minutes, but the film then jumps forward five years. *Endgame* does something that no other Marvel film does in letting us see our heroes when they're at their weakest and it's really quite heartbreaking to watch.

However, by the end of the film it's pure cinematic joy. Watching the Avengers return from the dead and enter through all of the portals is a moment that fans of the franchise will cherish forever. It's a crossover on a colossal scale that's every nerd's dream and it's everything Marvel fans could ever ask for. *Avengers: Endgame* makes for a perfect conclusion to these characters that we've watched for so many years. Seeing how characters like Captain America, Iron Man and Black Widow all reach the end of their stories is really beautiful to watch and it's unlikely that we'll get a film of this scale for a very long time, if ever. – **Jed Wagman**

2

SPIDER-MAN 2

T

hese days, there is no shortage of superhero movies. It is fair to say that some are bigger

than others, and filmmakers are infusing them with genre flavours in an effort to keep them fresh. Feel like a crime thriller? *The Dark Knight* has your back. More interested in a heist flick? We have an *Ant-Man* or two for that. If horror and Lovecraftian monsters are more your thing, take your pick of *Hellboys*. But if you're looking for a true superhero epic, there is only *Spider-Man 2*.

When Sam Raimi released his first *Spider-Man* film in 2002, audiences hadn't seen a superhero film as bright and colourful since Christopher Reeve first donned his famous red and blue tights in 1978's *Superman*. At the start of the late-90s comic-book movie boom, black dominated Marvel's cinematic heroes with

the character's outfits reflecting the darker mood of each film – reflecting comic-page accuracy for Wesley Snipes' *Blade* but reducing the X-Men's usually bold spandex attire to a singular leather number. Fans, both young and old, knew they had nothing to worry about when Tobey Maguire first swung onto the scene in his vibrant, webbed suit, and with his brighter costume also came a lighter tone, taking the material just seriously enough while also embracing the web-slinger's campy origins. Being a kid in 2002, you believed a man could crawl on walls.

With the origin story successfully told, Raimi and co. returned for the next chapter of Peter Parker's life two years later. What audiences got was the rare sequel that not only matches its predecessor, but is able to surpass it in every way. Filmed in 2.39:1 widescreen and bathed in a gloriously golden light by director of photography Bill Pope, *Spider-Man 2* is a grand affair, blending fantastic action sequences with a classically cinematic love

story. Drawing from the famous storyline 'Spider-Man No More!', Peter begins to doubt his place as Spider-Man as New York's never-ending parade of crime continues to play havoc with his personal life, most of all his relationship with the love of his life, Mary Jane Watson (Kirsten Dunst). Hanging up the spandex proves even more difficult, however, when a dangerous new foe appears on the horizon.

In a stroke of casting genius, Alfred Molina provides the perfect antithesis to Willem Dafoe's Green Goblin. While Dafoe brought brilliantly unpredictable, cackling chaos to his role, Molina goes even deeper. We meet him as a likable and respectable scientist, deeply in love, and spirited with the ambition to make the world a better place. Unfortunately, Stan Lee was never kind to anyone with an alliterative name, and so Otto Octavius becomes the monstrous Doctor Octopus as his four-armed scientific apparatus is fused to his body. Without the inhibitor-chip to keep the artificial intelligence in



WORDS: SCOTT ZISSOU WALKINSHAW

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check, Octavius' new robotic limbs corrupt his mind like a virus, leaving him enraged, violent, and hell-bent on creating his fusion-reactor, even if it means destroying New York City in the process. Yet through it all, we hope that redemption may finally await Otto. At first, Molina plays the character as if he has been reborn – confused and scared – before villainous influence begins to take over. Like Peter, Octavius is bound by feelings of responsibility. Unknowingly echoing Uncle Ben's famous words, he even tells him that "intelligence is not a privilege, it's a gift." Like many of fiction's best bad guys, Otto believes he is doing the right thing, and it's a path that ultimately leads to his downfall, but also his redemption. Seeing Molina drift into the river's depths, we can't help but lament another loss in Peter's life.

While the filmmakers embraced the action sequences and bold characters of the comics, they also gave tremendous weight

to the more human aspects that made those comics such a success with adolescents worldwide. Try as he might, Peter's good intentions and responsibility can't help but throw his life off balance. He can't hold down a simple pizza delivery job, get his college assignments handed in on time, or even catch a single performance of Mary Jane's new play. Naturally, he often asks the question "why me?", but we never think him pathetic for doing so. Everyone can relate to at least one time in their lives when the odds just seemed to be stacked against them.

Of course, Peter is not the only one with troubles. After establishing a strong presence in the first film, Rosemary Harris is now given the time to become the definitive Aunt May. It is almost impossible to look into her warm and well-meaning face and not see a parent or grandparent who has looked at you as fondly as May looks at Peter. Our hearts are in our throats when Doc Ock

snatches her from the street and throws her to the ground below, but they also sink when eviction looms and she is unable to get a loan (or a complimentary toaster) from the bank. But, like Peter, we are comforted when she finds the strength to go on and encourages Peter to do the same. Sally Field and Marisa Tomei gave good performances in their respective franchises, but in Rosemary Harris' hands, May feels like family.

Who would have guessed that the director of the *Evil Dead* franchise would be as adept at directing melodrama as he would action scenes? Raimi's sense of drama and pathos is why *Spider-Man 2* works as well as it does. The film is never in a hurry to get to the next big set-piece. Instead, the dramatic moments are given room to breathe. Take, for example, Peter's admission to Aunt May that he is partly responsible for Uncle Ben's death. He reaches for her hand and, in the film's most crushing moment, she withdraws



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hers and silently leaves the room. The shot of Peter sitting alone at the kitchen table, unclear of his relationship with perhaps the last person with any unquestioned love left for him, feels like it lasts forever as the situation sinks in. The film is full of moments of conversation like these that may not advance the action, but do enrich the characters with life and personality not found in similar fare.

These days, it seems the superheroics within comic-book films are either for self-preservation or to prevent a world-ending threat. *Spider-Man 2* outdoes them all in a much simpler scene in which the titular hero attempts to stop a runaway train full of New Yorkers. This is the finest scene in all of superhero cinema. Nowhere better can you find a sequence that purely exemplifies the reasons the genre has become so beloved by people the world over. After fighting Doc Ock for a spell, the 8-limbed adversary rips out the train's control box, leaving it to

hurtle towards the eventual end of the line at frightening speed. Peter's first solution is to slow it down by foot, but he finds out (painfully) that this will not work. His next idea involves latching on to every passing building with his webs, an act that begins to slow the train down, but at the cost of almost ripping Peter in two as he struggles to hold on to the ropes. All praise to Maguire for forgoing any sense of Hollywood composure and beauty – he looks like a man literally splitting at the seams, and we can practically feel the strain ourselves. As the carriages grind to a halt, an unmasked Peter passes out from exhaustion, but before he can fall, the hands of the rescued citizens catch him and bring him safely inside the train. When Peter comes to, he is alarmed to find his identity revealed to everyone onboard, but they assure him that his secret is safe with them. The first *Spider-Man* had a similar moment of solidarity between the people and their hero, but while that was a post-9/11 rally of American unity, *Spider-Man 2*

opts for a quieter, more touching moment. No shouting, no bravado, just simple gratitude to a young man willing to lay down his life for the people. As Danny Elfman's beautiful score gently sweeps in, you would be forgiven for getting a little choked up.

In a film so packed with plot-threads and characters - including the welcome return of JK Simmons' pitch-perfect portrayal of hot-tempered editor J. Jonah Jameson – it's a wonder that Raimi manages to balance everything so well, especially considering the franchise's eventual overload in 2007's *Spider-Man 3*. But before that film could put an end to Tobey Maguire's web-slinging adventures (or so we thought...), *Spider-Man 2* left audiences with nothing but elation as they watched him swing off into the distance of the Manhattan skyline. Aunt May tells Peter that she believes "there's a hero in all of us." After seeing *Spider-Man 2*, you could almost believe it yourself. **M**

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THE DARK KNIGHT

WORDS: CALLUM BARRINGTON

I

s it a surprise that *The Dark Knight* has topped the FilmHounds' list of the all-time best comic book movies? Absolutely not. This is a film that has transcended cinema, becoming as influential and impactful as the likes of *Citizen Kane* and *The Godfather*. It is a film that showcases the very best of mainstream moviemaking, proving that, despite a big budget and pyrotechnics, it's entirely possible to create something with very real tragedy at its core.

The Dark Knight works so well because, in essence, it isn't a

comic-book movie. Yes, there are characters from comic books, and there are certain stunts that defy gravity, but it's essentially a high-stakes crime thriller wrapped in a superhero film. Director Christopher Nolan, emboldened by the huge success of the film's terrific predecessor *Batman Begins* (2005) takes inspiration from Michael Mann's *Heat* (1995) and fashions a dark, edgy, moody, modern take on the heist genre, using real-world tensions and fear after 9/11 to comment on society's cyclical habit of building up a hero, only to tear them down just as quickly.

Consequences loom large in *The Dark Knight*. As the trio of heroes, Batman/Bruce Wayne (Christian

Bale), Lieutenant/Commissioner Jim Gordon (Gary Oldman) and Gotham's new 'white knight' DA Harvey Dent (Aaron Eckhart) start to make a real difference in the fight against crime in the city, their resolve and their spirit are pushed to breaking point by the arrival of a very unique, unstoppable force of nature known as the 'Joker' (played in brilliant Oscar-winning fashion by Heath Ledger).

Determined to prove that Gotham is a city beyond saving, Joker's relentless reign of terror upon the city pushes Batman to the very edge, forcing him to confront the very darkest recesses of his mind, making him realise just how close he often comes to being the enemy. The biggest casualty is Dent, whose



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own words 'you either die a hero, or live long enough to see yourself become the villain' come true in the worst way imaginable.

Batman has gone through many different phases during his eighty-plus years in comic books and movies. The image of the Caped Crusader for an entire generation was Adam West's campy, often ludicrous 60s TV series, which seemed to portray him and Robin as the only competent figures of justice in town. Then, the character was reinvented in 1989, when Tim Burton brought a gothic, Hammer-tinged flavour to proceedings.

Although its sequel *Batman Returns* (1992) has developed a well-deserved reputation, initial cinemagoers were horrified by the film's tone, causing the studio to retreat to a more family-friendly version of Batman. This meant regressing to innuendos and endless puns in *Batman Forever* (1995) and the horrendous *Batman and Robin* (1997).

Nolan's decision to reverse the trend in *Batman Begins* proved that it was entirely possible to do Batman properly. By extension, *The Dark Knight* is a more confident step in the same direction. Having established that the Dark Knight is not an indestructible freak in a cowl, but a flawed, tortured orphan haunted by the death of his

parents, Nolan unleashes Wayne's fears that he might be doing more harm than good, and that, perhaps, Gotham is better off without him.

The Joker is determined to get Batman to break his one rule, and although he doesn't strictly succeed in getting him to do so, he nevertheless accompanies a goal far more harmful - Batman takes the blame for Dent's downfall, forcing himself into exile and causing Gotham, and his only allies, to turn their back on him. Having saved the city from tearing itself apart, he must now live with the decisions he has made, which have caused him both personal and public torment.

It isn't just Batman who experiences growth and depth under Nolan's watchful eye. In the past, the supporting allies were pushed into the background as the filmmakers focussed more on the rogues' gallery. Whilst it's impossible to imagine the film without the Joker, some of the most powerful moments in the film come from those on Batman's side.

Alfred, the loyal butler, finds his loyalty to Bruce stretched to the limit as he watches his master tear himself apart trying to stop the Joker. Lucius Fox evolves from a mere 'Q' like figure into a voice of reason and sanity, refusing to continue his association with Wayne Enterprises if Batman's unethical ways continue.

By far the most improved character is Jim Gordon. Previously a bumbling, shuffling oaf, here he takes a proactive role in the story, determined to show that the GCPD is not beyond saving and that the Joker can be brought down legitimately. He, like Dent and Wayne, finds himself experiencing the very worst of circumstances, as he watches his family, previously the only thing he values that wasn't

his job, implode when the two worlds spectacularly collide.

The Dark Knight was hugely controversial when it was released in summer 2008. Parents hoping to take their children to see the film were aghast at what they saw - from Joker embedding a pencil into a thug's eye, to Dent being burned alive and transformed into Two-Face, it pushed the boundaries of its '12' rating as far as possible.

Truthfully, though, this isn't a Batman film for kids. It's a mature, adult movie, made for cinemagoers who appreciate that violence is necessary when telling stories about dishonourable people doing bad things, and honourable people doing extreme things they never imagined. Nolan creates a rich canvas in which there's no real hero, which is entirely faithful to the comic book origins. Batman has never been the virtuous symbol Superman represents, nor is he as naïve and approachable as Spider-Man. He's simply a man (admittedly a very rich man), who takes a stand against injustice and illegality, but whose methods are, at times, questionable.

When talking about *The Dark Knight*, the one name that can't be ignored is Heath Ledger. The reaction to his casting was akin to the furore that surrounded Daniel Craig's announcement as James Bond in 2005, or the recent dissenting voices that questioned Robert Pattinson taking over in the upcoming *The Batman*. How could this man, who had been a teen heartthrob in *10 Things I Hate About You* (1999) and an emotionally crippled cowboy in *Brokeback Mountain* (2005), possibly play what is arguably the greatest comic book villain ever created?

Well, he could, and what a performance it was. Ledger is



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sensational as the Joker, producing a genuinely frightening, scarily realistic take on the Clown Prince of Crime, that banishes memories of both Cesar Romero's moustachioed version and Jack Nicholson's over-the-top portrayal in Burton's *Batman*. What makes Ledger so good in the role is that he feels real - the Joker may be buried beneath make-up, but there's a terrifying possibility that a person like this could exist in the real world.

When Ledger's face shifts and his body language changes, the sudden impulses of the Joker are no longer spontaneous - they're planned and intentional. Even when he's forced to think on his feet, he always feels in control. It's no accident that the Joker is the only one of Nolan's three major villains who survives at the end of his respective movie.

Perhaps the plan was to feature him again in the sequel, *The Dark Knight Rises* (2012), but, alas, Ledger's real-life death made any possibility redundant. Deservedly, Ledger became the second person to win a posthumous Oscar for his performance, as well as the first person to do so for a comic book movie (Joaquin Phoenix would later

earn his own Oscar for playing another variant of the character in *Joker*).

Ledger dominates the movie, but, in all honesty, there's not a bad performance in the cast. Christian Bale's 'Batman' voice is often ridiculed, yet his second turn as Bruce Wayne is hugely impressive - this is a Batman on the edge, a man who almost finds a life beyond the cowl, only to have it cruelly snatched away. Bale's chemistry with Michael Caine's Alfred is brilliant, and many of Caine's speeches ('some men just want to watch the world burn') have real-world relevance.

Gary Oldman, one of the finest actors of his generation, plays what has become the ultimate on-screen interpretation of Commissioner Gordon, a man of action and integrity, who doesn't always need Batman's help to get the job done. The *Rolling Stone's* review of the film said Oldman makes 'virtue look exciting'. Aaron Eckhart's Dent is a world away from Tommy Lee Jones' histrionics. There's something almost Shakespearean in the way Nolan charts Dent's downfall and Eckhart plays it to the hilt. If there's anyone in the movie

who deserves sympathy, it's him.

Both Maggie Gyllenhaal, replacing Katie Holmes as the doomed Rachel Dawes, and Morgan Freeman as Lucius Fox, are provided their own pivotal moments in the spotlight. Gyllenhaal brings spark and tenacity to Rachel, a woman suited to both Bruce and Harvey, while Freeman is revitalised by the film's third act, which brings Fox out from the shadows and places him at the forefront of Gotham's battle for survival.

Matt Reeves' *The Batman* is one of 2022's most anticipated movies. It's a fresh take on Batman that could well go on to be the best reinvention yet. It's doubtful, though, that it will reach the cultural heights of *The Dark Knight*. This isn't just a movie, it's the single greatest achievement of 21st century cinema to date. Along with *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, it has defined a genre and gained international significance. Of the thousands of comic book movies over the years, none have made as big an impact as *The Dark Knight*, and I doubt one ever will again. **N**



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ROBERT PATTINSON

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GOING FOR GOTHAM

THE FASCINATING CAREER OF

ROBERT PATTINSON



WORDS: TOM BEASLEY

A

decade ago, the announcement that Robert Pattinson was going to play Batman

wouldn't have been a surprise at all. As the noughties gave way to that weird decade we never quite came up with a name for, Pattinson was the star of one of the most lucrative movie franchises in Hollywood and was certainly one of the most famous men on the planet, with his every move followed by a rabid teenage fanbase and the flashbulbs of the tabloid press. He even had a quirky showbiz nickname to show for it.

But, actually, it's in Pattinson's reaction to that nickname that we can see the first stirrings of the bizarre, idiosyncratic performer

he would become over the subsequent phase of his career. "I don't understand who invented that thing R-Patz," he told *The Guardian* in 2012, adding: "I want to strangle them". Pretty emphatic stuff then, only exacerbated by the fact he was promoting a movie in which he worked with body horror supremo David Cronenberg as a sex-obsessed capitalist crook with a penchant for limousine prostate exams. Not exactly the typical choice for a teen heartthrob.

That's the thing about Pattinson. Since he waved goodbye to the sparkly skin of vampire Edward Cullen in the *Twilight* movies, he has consistently made confounding and compelling choices as an actor. Any attempt to put him in a box has been thwarted by Pattinson's desire to do something bold, brave and baffling every time he steps on

to a movie set. *The Batman* marks his return to the major blockbuster arena, after his supporting role in Christopher Nolan's time-bending heist flick *Tenet* back in 2020 saw him dip a toe back into that world.

But before Pattinson takes the Batmobile for a spin around Matt Reeves' take on Gotham City, let's have a look at the actor's varied and unusual post-*Twilight* oeuvre, starting with that Cronenberg outing...

DARKNESS IN THE HILLS

Cosmopolis premiered at the Cannes Film Festival in May 2012, six months prior to the release in cinemas of *The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn – Part Two*. In some ways, Pattinson's character is another vampire – 20-something billionaire Eric Packer, who has

made his money in currency speculation. He rides slowly through New York City in the controlled environment of his plush limousine, hermetically sealed in cold isolation away from the raucous anti-capitalism protests tearing apart the streets outside. Over the course of the single day covered by the film, he barely reacts as currency fluctuations cause him to lose millions of dollars. There's an "easy come, easy go" feel to the way he talks about money.

The film is obviously a commentary on the destructive impulses of capitalism, and the way greed only begets more greed. Indeed, the financial stakes of Packer's investments are so high as to almost become too low. When the numbers are that huge, does it matter?

But the casting of Pattinson – then one of the world's biggest stars – also makes it a musing on the notion of stardom and its power to create a sort of meaningless unreality. While the world outside of Packer's limousine erupts with passion and energy directed towards him and his kind, the trappings of wealth and fame keep him in a sanitised, unexciting world. By the time Packer confronts his would-be assassin in the movie's finale, it seems he's opting to face death just to break the monotony and feel something again.

This idea of destructive fame would resurface once again two years later when Pattinson rejoined a Cronenberg ensemble – in a supporting role this time – for the brilliant, nightmarish Hollywood satire *Maps to the Stars*. This time around, Pattinson is in the driver's seat of the limousine as

budding actor Jerome, ferrying famous faces around as he awaits his own opportunity to shine as a performer. The movie follows the arrival in Hollywood of a burns victim, played by Mia Wasikowska, who seeks to reconnect with her famous family while serving as personal assistant to Julianne Moore's fading movie star.

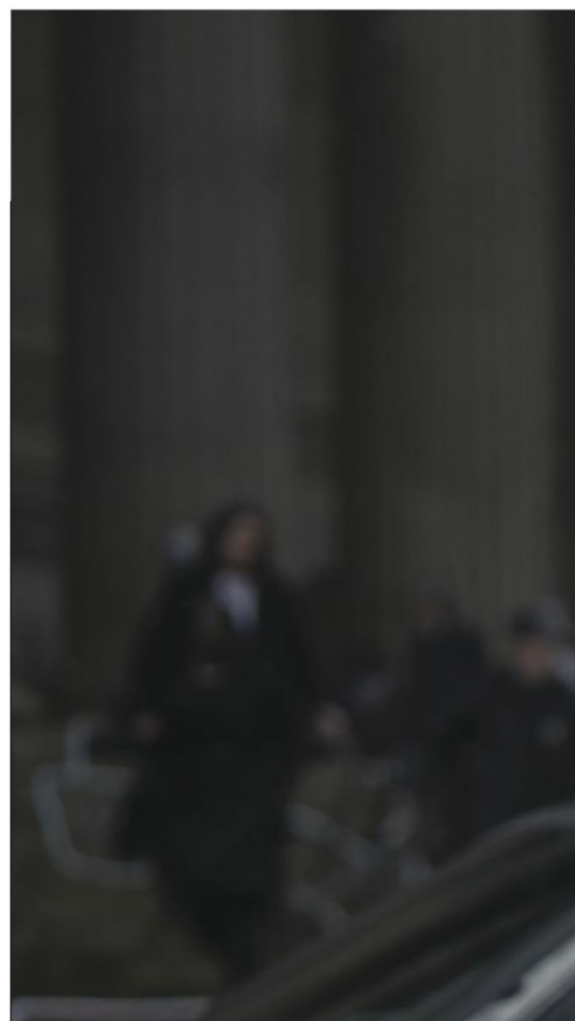
Pattinson is arguably the least showy member of the entire ensemble, positioned as the ordinary person trying to find a way into the mad world that has so corrupted the central family of characters. But it's clear that these were the sort of projects which fascinated him as an actor at this time. It's not so much that he was trying to distance himself from his teen idol fame in the manner of Daniel Radcliffe, who took weird and defiantly adult roles in the likes of *Horns* and *Swiss Army Man* after *Harry Potter* came to an end. Pattinson, instead, decided to confront his own fame head-on and use his unique aura to directly critique the system which turns somebody like him into a sexy clone fit more for magazine covers than challenging thesping.

DOWN AND DIRTY

After his Cronenbergian diptych, Pattinson continued to take on a selection of varied and interesting roles, albeit without the mannered acting and smart suits of *Cosmopolis*. The pick of these is definitely 2017 thriller *Good Time*, directed by the Safdie brothers in a sort of dress rehearsal for the two and a half hour anxiety attack that *Uncut Gems* proved to be. *Good Time* sees a frazzled and unkempt Pattinson play a small-time crook attempting to bust his disabled brother out of hospital, where he is

being held after a prison fight.

It's a simple premise and the film is not heavy on plot, simply ricocheting wildly from incident to incident in the way that has come to characterise the Safdies' hyper-stressful style. Pattinson manages to keep the intensity high as a criminal driven not by greed or evil, but by a desire to remain close to his brother. Much of the storytelling burden is placed upon Pattinson's shoulders, with the Safdies allowing the film to unfold almost entirely in suffocating close-ups, and the actor is very much up to the challenge. His eyes are full of manic, desperate energy and there's something about him which makes you root for his success, even though he is clearly and obviously bad news both for



himself and for his vulnerable brother.

While the demands of *Good Time* required grounded work from Pattinson, two of his most memorable recent roles ask him to embrace theatrical silliness. As the Dauphin in historical epic *The King*, he deploys a ludicrous French accent akin to the one John Malkovich used as the villain in *Johnny English*. It's a camp, absurd performance amid a mostly serious take on Shakespeare, anchored by Timothée Chalamet's title character but given life by Pattinson's fun-loving work as the ultimately doomed French ruler who clashed with Henry V in the sludge of Agincourt.

He's similarly over-cranked in

another Netflix release – Antonio Campos's 2020 literary adaptation *The Devil All the Time*. Pattinson plays the deliciously named preacher Preston Teagardin in the grotesque, southern-fried slice of Gothic bleakness, which also sees Tom Holland shedding the wholesome trappings of Spider-Man to get some dirt beneath his fingernails. Preston is a loathsome individual, who hides behind the cloak of faith in order to manipulate underage women into sex, and Pattinson gives it both barrels – not least with an elaborate drawl of a Southern accent. In one sermon, he venomously yells the word "delusions" as if it has five syllables. But it's not just the voice that shines, with Pattinson seeming to twist his handsome features and

natural charm into something slimy and serpentine.

The exact midpoint between this pair of enormous performances and the more controlled work of his Cronenberg collaborations is Pattinson's acclaimed turn in Robert Eggers' monochrome nightmare *The Lighthouse*. As the novice lighthouse keeper Ephraim Winslow – another really quite terrific moniker – Pattinson is positioned at the heart of a gradual descent into madness, exacerbated by the black-and-white cinematography and the unconventional, near-square aspect ratio Eggers deploys.

In many ways, it's the logical conclusion of this phase of Pattinson's career, with any trace of



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R-Patz hidden behind moustaches, mermaids and masturbation. Needless to say, the movie's horrific final image has stuck with me ever since I first saw the film back in early 2020 – and it's not going anywhere in a hurry.

GOING FOR GOTHAM

Pattinson's role in Christopher Nolan's *Tenet* feels like a conscious step back into the blockbuster arena, with the actor rediscovering all of the Hollywood charisma he has deliberately eschewed in some of his most critically adored work. Is it a little bizarre that a time-hopping intelligence operative is known by the decidedly unglamorous name Neil? Yes. We're a long way from Preston Teagardin or Ephraim Winslow there. But name aside, Pattinson clearly had a great time in *Tenet*. He wears beautiful suits, gives great hot guy

swagger and even gets to buckle up for some huge stunts.

All of those skills will put him in good stead for his opportunity to step into the expensive shoes of Bruce Wayne and the even more expensive cowl of Batman. It feels like the right time for Pattinson to embrace the spotlight once again, having spent a decade taking creative risks and pushing himself as a performer. In that sense, and given the career he has managed to carve out as an idiosyncratic and varied thespian, Batman might be the biggest risk of all.

With superhero movies exerting a stranglehold over modern Hollywood, it's all too easy to become pigeon-holed and permanently associated with a role as big as Bruce Wayne. Having just shed the sparkles of Edward Cullen, it takes a confident leading man to take on a character

who is even more famous and recognisable.

But the signs are good. The first trailer for *The Batman* was shown at the virtual DC FanDome event in 2020, cut together while COVID-19 restrictions meant the movie wasn't able to finish shooting in line with its original schedule. Fans had plenty of praise for the grounded tone Matt Reeves appears to be aiming for, with Pattinson portraying a younger and less self-assured Bruce Wayne than we have seen in previous adaptations. We'll find out when we finally get to experience every punch, kick and torrential downpour of Pattinson's Gotham on the movie's release date in March. Based on the last decade of the actor's diverse and challenging work, it's going to be quite the ride.

Just don't call him R-Patz. **■**

The poster features a dramatic scene of Hogwarts Castle perched on a rocky cliff. The sun is setting or rising directly behind the castle, creating a strong silhouette and a lens flare effect. The sky is filled with dark, swirling clouds. In the foreground, a large, fiery phoenix is shown in mid-flight, its wings spread wide, with bright orange and red flames trailing behind it. The overall tone is epic and magical.

FANTASTIC BEASTS
THE SECRETS OF
DUMBLEDORE

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No, The Batman doesn't need The Joker... yet

WORDS: FREDDIE DEIGHTON

It's time to face facts people, *The Batman* is set to be one of the best love letters to the Dark Knight that there's ever been since...well, *The Dark Knight*. Every single trailer has filled the world with dark and gritty joy in anticipation for what will most likely be Bruce Wayne's darkest on screen journey yet. The film being given a 15 rating in the UK and Ireland further sows the seeds of pure child like excitement that's been making all self respecting Bat-fans everywhere steaming red with impatience. Since that fateful first look at the DC Fandome back in 2020, we have all been set to prepare for superhero cinema on a legendary scale.

However, there is one niggling little thing that's been floating around online that could plant a pretty small yet still substantial spanner in the works. For the past few months, rumours have suggested that Barry Keoghan, instead of playing the character he's billed as online (Officer Stanley Merkel), will in fact be playing Batman's most infamous foe, The Joker.

This news may excite some, but for

many a dedicated Bat-fan, it will bring a sigh. *The Batman* seems not only to be an exciting new take on Batman himself, but it will be the first time that The Riddler will be given an actually serious adaptation. Instead of being simply a clone of the Joker that wears green instead of purple and spouts riddles instead of jokes, Paul Dano's take on the character looks to be a dark, tragic and politically motivated serial killer with frighteningly real inspirations like the Zodiac Killer. Fans of the comics will know that while Joker is Batman's greatest foe, Riddler is his smartest. Riddler is the villain who has often brought the Caped Crusader closest to breaking point in stories like *Batman: Zero Year* by Scott Snyder (which Matt Reeves clearly read before writing this script). He's also one of the few of Batman's Rogues Gallery to work out who it is underneath that famous cowl. It's exciting to see one of Batman's greatest villains finally being treated with the seriousness he deserves.

This is the opportunity that this new take on the World's Greatest Detective's world gives writers like Matt Reeves - a chance to give Batman's greatest villains the serious and dark adaptations to screen that they've been waiting for so long. Batman has the best

rogues gallery of any superhero, that is beyond question and that's why it's so tedious to hear that we may be getting yet another take on The Joker so soon. Unlike many of Batman's villains, Joker has been brought to screen to great success, more than once in fact. The role was perfected by Heath Ledger, but Jack Nicholson, Joaquin Phoenix and Jared Leto all have their fans.

The Spider-Man "Home" trilogy never introduced a new version of the Green Goblin and instead opted to adapt Spidey villains that had never been seen on the big screen before. Vulture, Shocker and Mysterio were all given their well deserved live action debuts in the MCU and this is what The Batman series should endeavour to copy. Mr Freeze and Poison Ivy, while being more paranormal than Batman's other villains, are tragic to the core and could easily be given more grounded and dark takes than what was seen in the overly campy *Batman & Robin* with Arnold Schwarzenegger and Uma Thurman. Readers need look no further than the famous episode of *Batman: The Animated Series*; Heart of Ice and the *Batman: Arkham* series of video games to see that these villains can be taken seriously and with a great deal of emotion to boot. Black Mask and Killer Croc too



are probably due a more serious, threatening and frankly respectful take than what they got in *Bird Of Prey* and *Suicide Squad*.

Giving previously less seriously adapted foes another live action chance isn't where this ends however. There's a plethora of Batman antagonists out there still waiting to be seen by general film audiences. Hush - a serial killer who steals his victims identities with a personal connection to Bruce Wayne - has great potential to be one of the greatest ever film villains if tackled well. Deathstroke - a deadly mercenary who so happens to be an expert in all forms of martial arts - while having been cast for Ben Affleck's Batman, probably won't go any further than the cameo we saw at the end of *Justice League*. Slade Wilson would be a terrifying force against Robert Pattinson's brutal version of Batman. Mad Hatter - a Lewis Carroll obsessed hypnotist with a horrifying taste for girls with visual similarities to the Alice of Wonderland fame - would definitely keep *The Batman* series as a dark, 15 rated saga. Hugo Strange, Calendar Man, Prometheus, Firefly, Man-Bat, Lady Shiva, The Arkham Knight, The Ventriloquist, Mr Bloom, Deacon Blackfire, Professor Pyg, Clayface, The Batman Who Laughs and of course The Court Of

Owls (which do seem to be implied to actually be in *The Batman*) all have dark potential in Matt Reeves' new universe.

This is not to say that The Joker wouldn't be welcome, of course he would be. It's just him being introduced in the first film seems too soon. Especially since this would presumably be to give him his full villainous outing in *The Batman 2*, we've already had a second Batman film with Joker as the villain, let's mix it up a bit shall we? However, when the clown prince of crime is eventually introduced, he would need to be different to what we've seen before. Heath Ledger already perfected the grittier more grounded take on the Joker, this Joker should be a scarier, more mysterious and maybe even a more outlandish version of the character. Matt Reeves could keep to his Scott Snyder inspirations and adapt the Joker seen in the *Death Of The Family* story arc, who's face was cut clean off and clumsily reattached with improvised straps - done so to prove that even beneath the skin, he's still the Joker. This would be a horrifying different interpretation of the character that would most certainly keep the series at a 15 rating and could even push it to an R in the States. Would Barry Keoghan be right for this

version of the character? Yes. He's played creepy characters before and isn't famous enough where his voice would be too recognisable to retain audience immersion.

Though with all these rumours it can be hard to sort fact from fiction. Barry Keoghan is indeed in *The Batman*, this is confirmed. If you look up his character's name, you'll find out that Stanley Merkel was an officer in the GCPD who befriends James Gordon and is then subsequently murdered by the Hangman, another lesser known Batman villain. This is a more appropriate role for Keoghan, a recognisable face within the swathes of faceless cops fighting against the Riddler whose possible murder is what drives Gordon and/or Batman to breaking point. Joker would be much more suited to a fan favourite casting such as Jake Gyllenhaal or Willem Dafoe.

Either way, Batman is the world's favourite superhero not only because he's simply a man who's perfected himself in every way in the face of unimaginable tragedy, but because he fights the greatest comic book villains of all time. The Joker is indeed one of them, but he's not the only one. DC, Warner Bros...it's time to broaden your horizons. **H**

A close-up photograph of a man with a dark beard and curly hair, and a woman with blonde hair, both looking off-camera with serious expressions. They are lying down, with the man's head resting against the woman's. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights and shadows.

ALI & AVA

Photos: Copyright Avall Film Ltd

**ALI
&
AVA**

**A SOCIAL
REALISM
MUSICAL**

**DIRECTOR
CLIO BARNARD
AND STARS
ADEEL AKHTAR
AND CLAIRE
RUSHBROOK**

WORDS: MARIA LÄTTILÄ

C

lio Barnard has crafted a mighty fine career in British cinema. Her debut, *The*

Arbor, was a groundbreaking and experimental documentary about playwright Andrea Dunbar and her follow-up, 2013's *The Selfish Giant* played at Cannes to rave reviews. It would be another 5 years until Barnard made another film, this time starring Ruth Wilson as her leading lady in the dark and affecting *Dark River*, and now, yet another 5 years later, we're finally awarded a new Barnard film in the form of *Ali & Ava*, starring Adeel Akhtar and Claire Rushbrook.

Barnard's work could be classed as dark and rather hopeless, but that's all changing with *Ali & Ava*, a love story between two Bradford residents who bond over their shared love of music. Full of hope, *Ali & Ava* feels like a warm hug, something we all need currently and Barnard agrees as we chat on a cold January morning over Zoom. "I wanted to make something that was celebratory and that was joyful and positive and what better than a love story to be able to do that?"

"I WANTED TO MAKE SOMETHING THAT WAS CELEBRATORY AND THAT WAS JOYFUL AND POSITIVE AND WHAT BETTER THAN A LOVE STORY TO BE ABLE TO DO THAT?"

Ali & Ava, which premiered in Cannes in July 2021 in the Directors Fortnight section of the festival to positive buzz and has since garnered favourable reviews at festivals as well as Bafta nominations for Outstanding British Film and Best Leading Actor for Akhtar who plays Ali, who falls for a fellow Bradford-resident Ava. Both characters are working through complex emotions around their loved ones; Ali still lives with his wife from whom he has separated from but hasn't told his family and Ava is coming to terms with the loss of her ex, a violent, racist man.

"I'm very lucky that I haven't experienced some of the awful things that my character had in this, but I felt a very visceral connection to her" says Rushbrook of her role as Ava. Rushbrook has had a varied career and has worked with notable directors, including Mike Leigh. "He's dogmatic, brilliantly so, about the actor separating themselves from their character. So when you work with him, at the end of every improvisation, or at the end of every take, he will always says, 'Come out of the character' Rushbrook notes, a skill useful for when playing the grief-stricken Ava.

"It's very important to separate, to be quite clear, that that's Ava and I'm Claire. But that said, it's a delight, and very liberating when you're enabled as an actor to be relaxed, and to be open and feel free. There's nothing like that feeling of connection and identifying with your character and what they're feeling and going through. That's your job, to find those connections with yourself and to use them."

For Akhtar, who joined the Zoom from a hotel quarantine in New Zealand, working with Barnard

was the big draw. The pair met at Toronto Film Festival while both promoting their respective films. “I put a shout out to my agent to say that I wanted to maybe get a meeting with her if it was possible. Maybe thinking that there was a slim chance that she’d say yes, even if she would just sit down with me just having a chat. That would have been enough, just because I’m such a massive fan of all the stuff that she’s done.”

Akhtar was involved in *Ali & Ava* straight from the beginning, when Barnard had nothing more than an outline and two characters based on real people Barnard had met while making her other films, but over time, the project developed into the film we’re seeing on our screens. Ali is based on a real-life landlord called Moey while Ava is based on a woman called Rio, both of whom were actively involved in the filmmaking process. Both actors met their real-life counterparts, although the story of *Ali & Ava* is completely fictional. “In this instance, it was very

important to me to meet the person who my character was based on and she welcomed me very generously into her home, her whole life and her thoughts and her feelings” Rushbrook says and both actors agreed that there wasn’t any pressure to mimic the real people Ali and Ava were based on.

“I knew I wasn’t going to be required to mimic or do anything like that. The most important thing for me, knowing that it was based on a real person, was just having respect for that person, but you do anyway, with any character you play, whether they’re real or not, because there will be people watching who are going through or have been through what your character has” Rushbrook continues.

“I was inspired partly by melodramas and by *Brief Encounter* in particular. *The Selfish Giant* in some way, it’s based on a fairy tale. And that’s very deliberate, this kind of mixing of social realism and this fairy tale and I suppose in a way, this

is a mix of social realism and melodrama, a love story. And also, perhaps because I fell in love” Barnard says of her decision to create a fictional story for *Ali & Ava*.

“What’s wonderful about Clio and the process that she developed, and actually all her films, is that there’s points of reality that anchor you into the story. And there’s moments in which you can move away from what those anchor points are” Akhtar says of Barnard’s filmmaking. Both actors speak highly of Barnard and her style of directing.

“I think it’s testimony to Clio who sets the tone of the atmosphere on set. She’s very quietly spoken. She’s a very warm, gentle sort of presence to have around. She likes a giggle” Rushbrook tells FilmHounds.

The film is set in Bradford, West Yorkshire, where all Barnard’s films have been set. *Ali & Ava* shines a light to a city that doesn’t usually get exposure on the big



screen and Barnard worked closely with cinematographer Ole Bratt Birkeland to capture the beauty of the city as well as move away from the usual, generic British kitchen-sink drama tropes. “I also worked very closely with Kamal Khan, who’s a writer and lives in Bradford and he really wanted to take me to places and show me bits of Bradford that he didn’t feel have been represented on the screen before.”

Music is also a huge part of the film’s narrative. Ali and Ava bond over their shared love of music, although different genres. Ali, a former DJ, enjoys the fast beats of electronic dance music while the quiet Ava enjoys folk and country, something Ali playfully teases her about. In a particularly sweet scene in the film, the couple have their own private silent disco in Ava’s living room with headphones until they’re interrupted by Ava’s son.

“If there could be a social realism musical or socially realistic musical, then this would be it”

Akhtar says of the film’s musical qualities.

According to Barnard, *Ali & Ava* was always designed as a music-heavy film. “It’s this sort of social-realist diegetic musical, that was very much a part of it right from the start, by having them both being really into music.”

“The point at which people sing and are the moments in which actual talking, doesn’t, can’t express what’s going on. So that’s why they sing and that’s why they have to dance. And so if I look up moments in the film, where Ali’s dancing on top of a car, or Ava’s looking up at the sky, or at least reaching up to like the sky, I think those are moments in which words fail. That’s the only way that thing could be expressed. And then a musical, the only way those heightened emotions can be expressed is through singing and dancing” Akhtar explains.

The film beautifully captures being northern and the customs and

habits of the very distinct identity of being from the north of England. Akhtar, who is from London, worked with a dialect coach to nail his character’s accent. “I think my worst fear is just one person from an area that your character’s from, that person would go “I don’t believe that”, taking them out of the story. I try and be as detailed as I can with all the accents and what I’m doing and even looking back on it now, there was definitely room for improvement.”

However, one Northern habit rises above the rest in Barnard’s film; offering everyone and anyone a brew. So how does Barnard, Akhtar and Rushbrook take their tea? Barnard and Rushbrook only have milk in their brew, but Akhtar laughs at the question.

“With biscuits!” 

Ali & Ava is in UK and Irish cinemas March 4, 2022.

TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE

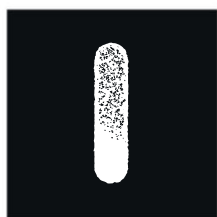


Photo: Yana Blayeva/Netflix

TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE

FRANCHISE AND THE OBSESSION WITH HORROR SEQUELS

WORDS: SARAH LORD



n the span of five months, we'll have seen the continuation of three iconic horror franchises:

Halloween, *Scream*, and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. While original horror films do still exist, big movie studios have a hard time letting go of the past, constantly bringing back franchises that are staples of the horror genre despite some less than mediocre entries. The most important thing to these studio heads is that these franchises have passionate fans who will flock to theaters (or a streaming service) and pay money to see any new addition to the series. While some horror remakes/sequels/reboots can be more than just mindless

cash grabs, Hollywood still doesn't seem to have a firm grasp on how to consistently make solid follow-ups to popular horror movie franchises. In the case of *Halloween* and *Scream*, these two franchises are very likely to continue. It's already known that David Gordon Green's current reincarnation of *Halloween* is going to be a trilogy, and with how well the fifth edition to the *Scream* franchise is doing, it's likely that the studio will want the series to live on in god knows how many more movies. Green's most recent addition to his eventual trilogy, *Halloween Kills*, was released to a mixed reception. While his initial *Halloween* film fared fairly well when it came out in 2018, *Halloween Kills* failed to measure up to how this continuation of the franchise began. In making it a trilogy, Green

is stretching the material rather thin, with *Halloween Kills* picking up right from where *Halloween* (2018) left off. With very weak writing and brutal kills that are all style and no substance, *Halloween Kills* is a perfect example of why and how most horror remakes and reimagining's don't stand the test of time as well as the original. It's clear that more thought was put into the new *Scream* movie, which came out this past month. Filmmakers Matt Bettinelli-Olpin and Tyler Gillett proved their worth as strong directors and big-time horror fans with their 2019 film *Ready or Not*, so much so that they were given the privilege to continue the beloved slasher franchise. Despite being strongly directed, *Scream* (2022) doesn't quite hit the mark. It's not the worst of the series

TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE

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(it's safe to say that that honor belongs to *Scream 3*), but it almost tries too hard to be a worthy sequel. There are too many forced connections with the new group of young people to characters from the original, and the ultimate reveal at the end doesn't carry the same weight as the reveals do in the other sequels. Despite these observations, the film is still doing quite well amongst fans and critics making it very likely that *Ghostface* will make another appearance in the not-so-distant future.

And now it's *Leatherface*'s turn to join the ranks of *Ghostface* and Michael Myers as resurrected horror baddies. The new film, leaving behind the "the" and simply titled *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, will be the ninth entry of the franchise. In the same vein as David Gordon Green's *Halloween* trilogy, this new film is ignoring all of the previous movies except the original. But to understand why this franchise is getting another "fresh start," it's

worth looking at the series as a whole to understand why so many attempts have been made to bring *Leatherface* back to the big screen.

The *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* franchise is, to put it plainly, a hot mess. If you can't believe that there are eight (going on nine) of these movies, get ready for all the different ways that they tried to put a different spin on *Leatherface*'s story. The original 1974 film, an undeniable horror classic, has three direct sequels, all declining in quality along the way. A remake was made in 2003 by Michael Bay's production company Platinum Dunes, which also led to a prequel to that remake in 2006. While the 2003 remake is the third highest rated film of the franchise on Rotten Tomatoes with a rating of 37%, the 2006 prequel is the lowest rated of the series with an impressive rating of 14%. These less than stellar numbers didn't stop another *Texas Chainsaw* film from being made in 2013, a

spiritual sequel to the original that ignores all previous entries to the series in glorious 3D. Four years later, the franchise continued with *Leatherface*, another prequel to the original film that belongs in the same timeline as the 2013 sequel. Now that that history lesson is over, it's time to discuss this year's *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and how it will fit into this overly convoluted franchise. Similar to the 2013 *Texas Chainsaw* movie, *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (2022) will ignore all previous films in the franchise except for the original. According to the synopsis provided by Netflix, *Leatherface* has been in hiding for nearly 50 years after the events in 1974. Now, a young group of influencers go to a remote Texas town and somehow reawaken the out-of-commission *Leatherface*. Along with the group of young people, the original final girl from the 1974 film, Sally, is still alive and has been waiting for the day that *Leatherface* would resurface to enact her revenge (reminiscent



of Laurie Strode in the *Halloween* 2018 reboot). Based on the full trailer that was just released at the time this article is written, this *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* looks like it will check all the boxes of a modern-day reboot/sequel (a reboot-quel, if you will), for better or worse. *Scream* (2022), *Halloween* (2018), *Halloween Kills*, and *Candyman* (2021) all introduce new characters while also tying back to the original movies in a big way, usually through their main character(s). *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* looks no different, although Sally is played by Olwen Fouere (Mandy) since Marilyn Burns, who played Sally in the original, passed away in 2014. With the full trailer released less than a month before it premieres on Netflix on February 18th, there's speculation that Netflix has intentionally not been fully promoting *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* as much as they should. This is mainly drawn from the fact that Legendary, the production

company behind *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, made Netflix its prime distributor despite originally planning on releasing it in theaters. Rumor has it that test screenings of the film did not go well, leading Legendary to this decision. According to Fede Alvarez (*Don't Breathe*) who co-wrote the story and produced it, these rumors are baseless, stating that test screenings went quite well. Whether the rumors are true or not, *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* didn't have the smoothest production, with the original directors leaving the project after a week of shooting. Director David Blue Garcia was brought in as the replacement and shot the film from scratch. It is believed that the original directors, brothers Andy and Ryan Tohill, didn't agree with Legendary's rewrites on the script and were either fired or quit.

With the hardships that this production faced, it's a wonder that so much work is being put into keeping this franchise alive. Looking back at the other films and their own attempts at putting a unique spin on the series, it's difficult to predict just how *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* will stand out and what it will contribute to the Leatherface saga. It's unlikely that it will go the route of the 2013 sequel/reboot which made a strong effort to connect to the original and made Leatherface as sympathetic as a skin-wearing cannibal can be. By what was shown in the trailer, this new film fits in a lot of modern elements (the fact that the young people are simply described as "influencers") while bringing back a vital element of the original (Sally). It's safe to say that if anything will be the saving grace of this new sequel, it will be the return of Sally. It seems like the writers are sticking to Leatherface being an unsympathetic madman, which

admittedly should work more than attempting to make him anyway sympathetic. It's just a question of whether that will be enough to make this movie be anything more than just another addition to a mediocre franchise.

Despite being dumped on streaming by the studio, premiering on Netflix might be the best-case scenario for *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. With the franchise's track record for not producing the best films, the accessibility it will have by being on one of the most popular streaming sites will definitely lead it to being seen by more people than if it was released just in theaters. There's no denying that the *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* franchise is one of the most misguided and inconsistent horror franchises out there. While it's difficult not to make negative assumptions about this new film, every movie does deserve a fair shake despite any prior knowledge. If it was made with the right intentions, it would be easier to be more optimistic about it. Sadly, we live in a time when horror reboots/remakes/sequels are constant, instilling a cynicism within movie fans and critics. We want these reboots/sequels to come from a genuine place of creativity and respect for the original material, and it's very easy to tell when that's not the case. It is possible to continue a franchise successfully without it being a soulless attempt at making money (the *Chucky* TV series is a good example), which is what the *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* movies have felt like for the last 20 years. Here's hoping that *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (2022) will at least be a fresh start for the franchise and will be a slight improvement over its predecessors. ■

Texas Chainsaw Massacre is available on Netflix now

The Young Rock Recipe

WORDS: HUMZA HUSSAIN

The first season of *Young Rock* debuted on February 16th, 2021, on NBC, and the series spearheaded by Dwayne ‘The Rock’ Johnson and critically acclaimed writer/director Nahnatchka Khan was in many ways years in the making. Johnson, the wrestler-turned-Hollywood megastar has spent years sharing the good, the bad, and the absolutely surreal moments of his life to audiences (predominantly on social media). For this reason, it’s hardly a surprise that *Young Rock*, a sitcom specifically focusing on Johnson’s days as a 10-year-old, 15-year-old, and a student at the University of Miami, was a massive success. *Young Rock* debuted with over 5 million viewers and earned critical acclaim, leading to a second season that will premiere on March 15th, 2022. What makes *Young Rock* deserving of its second season, beyond the ratings, is it didn’t coast on the name of its subject and the quirky yet popular elements of his life (e.g. that fanny pack look).

Although those elements exist, the series goes a little deeper than one might expect, creating a beautiful balance that allows *Young Rock* to accomplish Mel Gibson’s three E’s for Hollywood projects: entertain, educate, and elevate. This unique and often unaccomplished combination comes thanks to the beautiful balance of incorporating Dwayne Johnson himself, the key lessons and relationships of his life, and what is truly the conduit of the ‘People’s Champ’s’ life, professional wrestling.

The Rock is driven by an entertainment-first approach when it comes to his projects. Be it on the big screen, small screen, or a WWE ring, Johnson’s philosophy, as he told *Vanity Fair* in their November 2021 issue, is simply: “Let’s make people feel good.” *Young Rock* is no exception to that philosophy. Comedy is a driving force for the series, and it’s incorporated instantly in episode 1 thanks to the presence of The Rock himself, who, in a fictional storyline is discussing his 2032 presidential campaign with actor-turned-journalist Randall Park. Here, the audience gets the comfort of

Rock’s presence as he narrates and guides the narrative of each episode back to his younger days. In addition to the amusing storyline, we see Park shamelessly seeking validation from Johnson by touting his acting prowess while the star humorously obliges Park with a compliment. It’s an ever-so-subtle moment, a trademark of writer-director Khan, but a tone-setting one for the viewers. However, *Young Rock* also beautifully balances Khan’s sensibilities with Johnson’s more bombastic ones as episode 7, which dives back to his University of Miami days, is one big homage to Stallone and Schwarzenegger ‘80s action flicks. It’s a wonderful illustration of *Young Rock* adapting its subject’s life for entertainment purposes yet still hammering home the all-important life lessons from Johnson, which in episode 7’s case was sticking by your partners. *Young Rock* was always going to educate its audience due to some people being less familiar with the former WWE Champion’s life, but for those that are aware of his journey, the show explores the depth behind his experiences and messages too. Season 1 unravels Johnson’s discovery of his now



ever-present message of “being yourself,” which originated from his father Rocky Johnson’s wrestling talk of ‘working the gimmick’ (putting on a persona). In addition to this, it delves into the shoulder injury that derailed his freshman year playing football - rocking him into a depression of television, junk food, and flunking school – a thought that’s now almost unimaginable when looking at Johnson’s heroic image on screen. The series certainly opens the viewers’ eyes to Johnson’s life, especially for those that thought they knew everything, but more than anything perhaps, it hits home the words of Seven Bucks Productions’ president Hiram Garcia (from his book on Johnson) that The Rock’s “just one of us.” A point *Young Rock*’s Iron Sheik, Brett Azar, also highlighted when he stated that watching the show even made him think: “Wow, Dwayne Johnson went through the same thing I did.”

Another key ingredient to the *Young Rock* recipe was the significant presence of professional wrestling. Dwayne Johnson’s Hollywood metamorphosis came when he once again embraced his wrestling

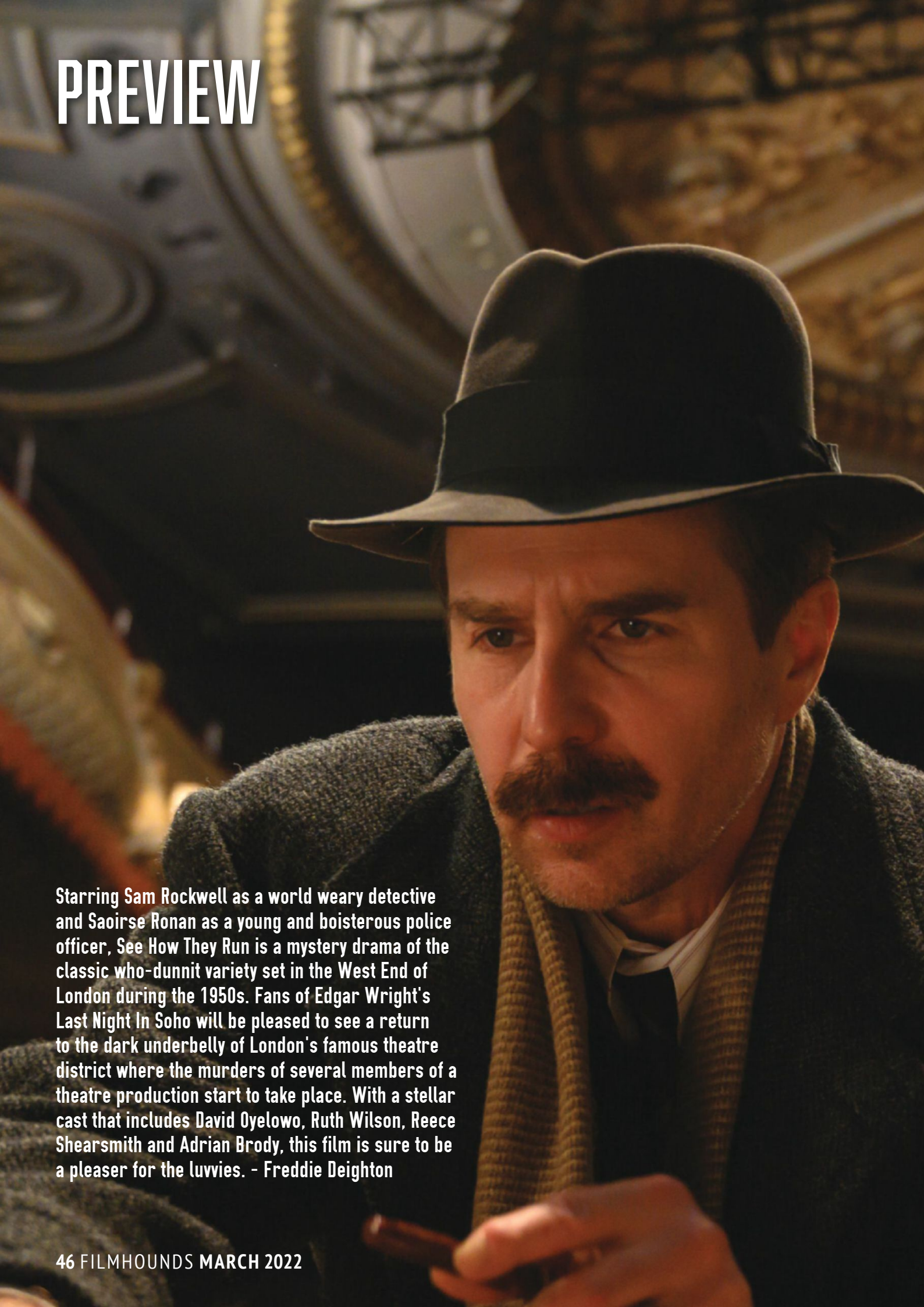
roots, so presenting wrestling with authenticity and respect is paramount for him when projects involve the sport. In *Young Rock*, legendary wrestlers like Andre The Giant and Iron Sheik are cast excellently, with actors like Matthew Willig and Azar looking and acting the parts. Also, fans of the era get a fun dose of brilliantly choreographed wrestling scenes like episode 6’s battle royal that features trademark moves and poses, beautifully capturing the era. Alongside the nostalgia, however, wrestling fans also get a positive education in what these iconic personalities were like beyond the ring, which is never more evident than the scene where Andre takes little “Dewey” to feed some birds. In one of the most heart-warming scenes of the entire first season, Andre teaches a young Johnson about perspective through various amusing and sincere analogies, such as not labelling a big bird as greedy simply because of its size. Johnson tells us in the episode that it’s through this conversation that Andre taught him that there are “a million different ways to look at something.” A scene like this gives an unprecedented insight into what these wrestlers were like beyond the ring at that time. Plus, it made them fresh, endearing characters to non-wrestling fans too. The professional wrestling element of *Young Rock* was an essential one, and it ensured the wrestling community got their nostalgia fix alongside a newfound understanding of who these individuals were. Judging by the reaction of countless high-profile wrestling personalities, including the Iron Sheik himself, *Young Rock*’s portrayal of wrestling was championship-worthy.

In an interview with SAG-AFTRA Foundation (2021), Johnson said that he thinks *Young Rock* “surprised the audience” and that “we really caught them off

guard with the love and the soul.” It’s through these surprises, *Young Rock* was able to elevate as well as entertain and educate. A big surprise is how the series intelligently blends the real and reel of Johnson’s life, which proves to be incredibly impactful when focusing on his beautiful relationship with his mother or his complex one with his father. Through this, we not only get well-written recreations in the flashbacks but the emotion is then enhanced when we see Johnson and his real-life mother interact, like in their powerful final scene in episode 11. The “love and the soul” Johnson speaks of is on full display in this scene, specifically when Johnson says to his mother: “I wish Dad could’ve been here to see where we’re at right now.” A line that leaves Rock’s mother visibly choked up (a moment that was genuine according to Johnson) before bravely saying her lines: “He is here. He’s very proud of you.” It’s a scene that helps emphasize the genuine love within the Johnson family, adding an extra emotional touch by touching on Rocky Johnson’s 2020 passing, and it’s a lump-in-the-throat moment fans were arguably not expecting to get from this sitcom.

Young Rock certainly had its clichés. However, it featured a variety of ingredients, and it was how it balanced those ingredients which led to the series achieving Gibson’s three E’s and earned it appreciation and success. *Young Rock* season 2 has a world of possibilities in terms of what it can explore, as the show teased various stories in season 1, and it did not even go into Johnson’s professional wrestling career. Regardless of what season 2 decides to explore, it has a clear style and blueprint it should look to follow come March 15th, and if it does this, as well as give the audience a tad more, fans will no doubt smell what *Young Rock* is cooking once again. **H**

PREVIEW



Starring Sam Rockwell as a world weary detective and Saoirse Ronan as a young and boisterous police officer, *See How They Run* is a mystery drama of the classic who-dunnit variety set in the West End of London during the 1950s. Fans of Edgar Wright's *Last Night In Soho* will be pleased to see a return to the dark underbelly of London's famous theatre district where the murders of several members of a theatre production start to take place. With a stellar cast that includes David Oyelowo, Ruth Wilson, Reece Shearsmith and Adrian Brody, this film is sure to be a pleaser for the luvvies. - Freddie Deighton

A close-up portrait of a woman with blonde, wavy hair, wearing a dark blue police uniform with a peaked cap. The cap features a circular crest with a crown on top. She is looking slightly off-camera with a serious expression. The background is dark and out of focus, showing warm, bokeh lights. The text 'SEE HOW THEY RUN' is overlaid in a bright blue box at the bottom.

SEE HOW THEY RUN

Is Nostalgia Helping or Hindering the Movies?

WORDS: NICOLA AUSTIN

T

here's no denying the excitement of seeing your favourite characters back together on the big

screen again. Likewise, experiencing moments which film franchises have been building up to for years - whether that's Steve Rogers finally wielding Mjolnir or the fully realised live-action *Spider-Verse* - these crowd-pleasing moments are appearing more and more, particularly in blockbuster franchises.

However, with a number of recent big-budget instalments receiving

criticism over their over-reliance on recycling plots from previous films, is this indulgence of nostalgia-driven filmmaking and giving fans "what they want" stopping franchises from making something as innovative or iconic as the films they're drawing from?

NOSTALGIA-DRIVEN NARRATIVES AND LEGACY CHARACTERS

While *Ghostbusters: Afterlife* featured a brand new cast, location and fun Amblin-esque vibe, along with a brilliant turn from McKenna Grace and Logan Kim as endearing scientist Phoebe and buddy Podcast, you unfortunately couldn't

escape the obvious similarities to the 1984 original. Packed with similar gags, lines, references, easter eggs, antagonists and legacy characters, the new instalment evolves into a rehash of the same old story from almost 40 years ago. Instead of continuing with the fresh focus on the new characters, Jason Reitman opts for a rose tinted nostalgia-driven final act, resulting in a film which feels tonally inconsistent and somewhat of a disservice to the new cast.

Looking at the current and upcoming slate of 2022 blockbusters, it's clear to see studios' showing a distinct preference with mining the nostalgia of beloved properties,



typically 80s and 90s, for a perceived 'safe' option, known as a pre-sold property. Along with the original *Ghostbusters* line-up reprising their roles, actors Neve Campbell, Courteney Cox and David Arquette recently joined a cast of fresh faces in the hugely meta fifth instalment of *Scream*. Legacy actors Sam Neill, Laura Dern and Jeff Goldblum will also be returning to the Jurassic franchise in *Jurassic Park: Dominion*, while Jamie Lee Curtis will be out for revenge as *Laurie Strode* in *Halloween Ends* in October and Michael Keaton will be donning the Dark Knight's cowl again in *The Flash* this November.

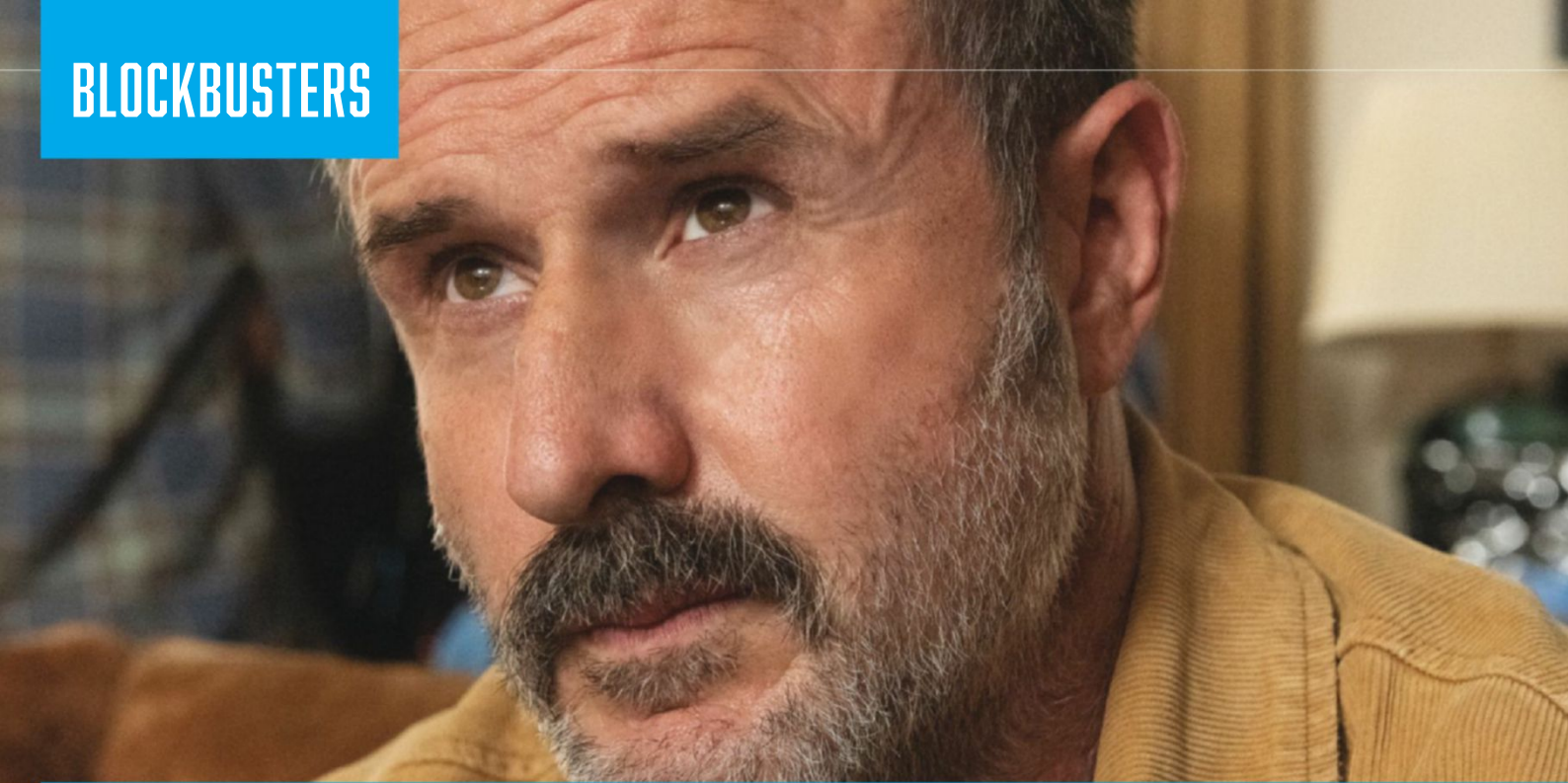
While it's certainly great to see our favourite actors reprising their

beloved roles once again, it's clear to see a trend of over-reliance on the warm feeling of nostalgia and emotional attachments from the inclusion of these characters in their respective franchises. When the buzz wears off and the hype dies down, the inclusion of legacy characters can often leave you comparing new and old instalments - with many concluding that the originals are often the best. With many legacy characters reprising their roles, it's easy to feel stuck in a relentless cinematic time loop looking back rather than forward.

FRANCHISES, CONTINUATIONS, REBOOTS AND REQUELS

With the buzz of certain blockbusters guaranteeing bums on cinema seats and lucrative box office returns, this trend appears to be driving a market almost exclusively comprised of nostalgia-driven franchises, continuations, reboots and 'requeles'. The knock on effect of these blockbusters driving box office returns generally leads to the monopolisation of cinema screens, reducing times and screenings for more of the bold, innovative and often first-time features.

Over the festive and new year period, *The Matrix Resurrections* and *Spider-Man: No Way Home* dominated the big multiplex cinemas, with a significant lack of



showings for festival hit *Titane*, along with Joel Coen's star-studded *The Tragedy of Macbeth* and Paul Thomas Anderson's latest feature *Licorice Pizza*. Cinema chains (and subsequently studio marketing budgets) unfortunately aren't known for taking a chance on the more indie and alternative titles, often limiting access to these features to predominantly arthouse cinemas only.

Often seen as an alternative genre to begin with, horror is also exhibiting a similar correlation between franchise, 'sequels' and nostalgia-driven blockbusters dominating multiplexes. Tent-pole franchises proved the main driving force behind box office returns last year, with *Scream*, *Halloween Kills*, *Candyman*, *The Purge* and *The Conjuring* proving the highest grossing horror films in 2021.

While it's positive to see such popularity and healthy box office returns surrounding this selection of films - with many viewers first introduced to the genre via tent-pole franchises and continuations - it's also concerning to see a lack of original films which don't rely on previous instalments and 80s/90s nostalgia as their main selling

point. More innovative and progressive original titles such as *The Night House*, *Censor*, *In The Earth*, *Antlers* and *Werewolves Within* unfortunately fell by the wayside in comparison, due in part to a lack of studio marketing and reduced cinema screenings, predominantly relegated to arthouse cinemas or streaming services.

MULTIVERSE MADNESS

Following Hollywood's embrace of the multiverse in *Spider-Man: No Way Home* and subsequently *The Flash* later this year, a whole new storytelling device will be opening the door to connect previous instalments. All of DC and Marvel's roster of superheroes who have appeared on the big screen across the years can now appear in their respective cinematic universes. However, surely this will only exacerbate the typical criticisms of comic book movies, including lack of originality and creativity and an over-reliance on CGI set pieces, easter eggs, fan service, constant tie-ins and becoming beholden to a shared universe.

As someone who grew up with the Raimi *Spider-Man* trilogy, and the

subsequent Marc Webb reboot, it was undeniably a joy to see Andrew Garfield and Tobey Maguire reprise their respective roles in *Spider-Man: No Way Home*. The latest MCU instalment brought together three generations of Peter Parker/Spider-Man in an epic and emotional showdown with their subsequent rogue gallery throughout the years. Seeing all three iterations teaming up and working together against iconic villains like Green Goblin and Doc Ock was a truly wonderful sight - along with Garfield finally getting a satisfying resolution for his version of Spidey by saving Zendaya's MJ.

The shared cinematic experience also proved a special moment for many, with cinema screens across the nation sharing collective tears, gasps and even cheers for certain sequences and cameos. The film also proved a brilliant introduction to previous instalments for the next generation of fans, with many parents sharing a special moment with their children through rewatching the Maguire and Garfield films in the run up to *No Way Home*.

While *Ghostbusters: Afterlife* relied too heavily on recycling the same

WORDS: MARK ANTHONY AYLING

familiar story beats and using legacy characters to propel subsequent sequels, *No Way Home* instead uses legacy characters as mentors to guide and steer the current Spider-Man on his own path. However, compared to the animated flick *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse* - which introduced a whole new roster of Spidey iterations including Miles Morales - director Jon Watts did lean on the past rather than looking to the future, leading us to question, was *No Way Home* really as groundbreaking as it could have been?

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

It's clear that during this current turbulent economic period, studios need to be sure that they can secure a profit, so they're doubling down on well known franchises and familiar, nostalgia-driven films - targeting a certain demographic in the process. And unfortunately, while these properties are still proving lucrative cash cows, major studios and distributors aren't going to take a gamble on a brand new concept without either a major director or actor on board.

So with nostalgic properties and fan service here to stay until the next big thing takes the pop culture world by storm, it's important for directors to strike a balance between sprinkling just enough to reel fans in, while propelling the story and characters forward. Crowd-pleasing moments are hugely rewarding and exciting, but they shouldn't be included at the detriment of compelling storytelling. How exciting would it be for a tent-pole franchise to take a leaf out of *Scream* directors Matt Bettinelli-Olpin and Tyler Gillett's book, by subverting our expectations and surprising us with their bold choices. **■**



n 1974, a year before *Jaws* catapulted Steven Spielberg into the big leagues, *The*

Sugarland Express was released to limited fanfare. It received a mixed critical reception and achieved moderate box-office on release, barely hinting at the success the populist filmmaker would experience during the latter half of the decade.

The film was Spielberg's first theatrical release in the US, following a stint directing TV episodes and made-for-TV movies such as seminal killer-truck flick *Duel*, which had a limited theatrical release outside the US.

The Sugarland Express is the tale of a young, white-trash fugitive couple, based on the real-life exploits of ill-fated lovers, Ila Faye Holiday and Robert 'Bobby' Dent. Likeable petty criminal, Clovis Poplin, played with pop-eyed guilelessness by William Atherton, dodges a jail-term to support impulsive partner Lou Jean (Goldie Hawn) rescue their son from foster care. However, their principled adventure, which results in them being lauded as folk heroes by the Texas citizens monitoring their progress and hounded as criminals by the army of police chasing after them, is as ill-conceived as it is entertaining.

Spielberg was 26 years old when he directed and co-scripted the film, which echoed the narrative and thematic preoccupations of counter-cultural milestones *Bonnie and Clyde*, and Terrence Malick's *Badlands* released around the same time.

Whilst functioning predominantly as a small-scale, character-driven chase movie, featuring one of the

slowest car chase sequences in film history, Spielberg's movie would find time to ridicule America's burgeoning obsession with celebrity, its fetishistic fascination with firearms and the conservative values of the era, which were under increasing scrutiny at the time of its release.

However, despite its alternative leanings and unruly subject-matter, it would prove a much lighter confection than either *Badlands* or *Bonnie and Clyde*, in that it sought to win audience sympathy for its big-hearted, misguided leads, who are compassionately represented throughout.

Notable in retrospect for being the first film John Williams scored for the director and for establishing a recurring motif in the director's work, that of the dysfunctional family, which would feature in *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial*, and *War of the Worlds*, to name but a few, *The Sugarland Express* quickly faded into the background, developing a reputation as a low-key cinematic curiosity, compounded by Spielberg's subsequent run of crowd-pleasing hits.

However, despite its anomalous status, it has encountered a renaissance in recent years as critics and fans seek to reappraise Spielberg's earlier films, in the context of his subsequent success.

It will never be regarded as top-tier Spielberg, given the films that followed. However, its rebel narrative and flint-edged Texas vistas remain intact nearly half a century on, ensuring it remains a road-trip worth taking. **■**

Does

Pam & Tommy

Really Break

The Cycle of

Sexual Shame?

Words: Jasmine Valentine

H

ulu's take on 'the greatest love story ever sold' is bound to raise more than a few eyebrows on objective merit alone. Charged with sexual escapades, nudity and a talking penis, the 8 part series chronicles the tumultuous public leaking of Pamela Anderson and Tommy Lee's sex tape in the mid 1990s.

Praised by many critics for providing a humane lens to when the pair were mercifully crucified for something they couldn't control, Craig Gillespie's decision to portray it at all sits uncomfortably against reports of Pamela's pleas against the release. While trying to provide a counter-argument to trauma that should validly exist in its own right, does *Pam & Tommy* truly help to shift the media stigma of a woman's sexuality?

Speaking about the initial backlash, Gillespie stated "The thing that gave







me comfort was I felt like we really had an opportunity to change the narrative of this story, and to show it from a perspective that people can hopefully learn and grow from.” This immediate transfer of importance back to the male conscience sets an apt tone for the bottom line of the series’ release—in spite of it all, guys feel within their rights to tell a woman’s story for them. And not just any woman in this case, but the biggest sex symbol of the 90s.

The Question of Consent

There’s no question that *Pam & Tommy* has nuanced conversation embedded within it. Viewers are treated to the impact of the porn industry in everyday life, the perspective of the socially imposed ‘slut’ and operating within the framework of the rockstar complex. Yet in the bigger picture, there’s no new information.

What we learn about the leak itself could mostly be gleaned from news reports, and the narrative gaps are filled with dramatised imaginations that could potentially be dangerous. For a series that aims to add an empathetic edge to an already victimised crime, there’s a sense of irony to involuntarily

stating that a woman is only empathetic if her trauma is publicly aired. If reports are believed (as there has been no direct comment), the act of directly going against the wishes of the person in question unquestionably counteracts the supposed intentions. In the words of countless social activists—the only form of consent is a direct “yes”.

As rightly pointed out by Terri White in *The Big Issue*, there’s a lot of ambiguity surrounding who has ownership of this story. The excuse of the leak happening in the public domain will undoubtedly be used, especially as the protagonist of *Pam & Tommy* is neither of the two stars mentioned, but instead the amateur thief Rand Gauthier (played by Seth Rogan). With his t-shirt tan, porn addiction and unshakeable ego, he clearly defines the idea of environment moulding the man—and poses the question of whether Gillespie’s supposed message could have been achieved completely fictitiously.

The lack of relationship between star Lily James and Anderson herself is particularly telling. After reportedly trying and failing to reach out, the pair meld into one another seamlessly onscreen. At no point is James’ acting ability questioned, as the focus remains solely on Pamela (or ‘Pam’ as she’s referred to in the over-familiar

title). While such an incredible physical transformation takes the eye, it’s not too far-fetched to assume that instances of full-frontal nudity were encased by a replica body suit. With recent reports that James and Sebastian Stan did watch the infamous sex tape, the act of being vulnerable once again defaults to the misfortune of the real Anderson, bearing the brunt of attention she didn’t consent to.

Who’s The Real Pamela Anderson?

Much of the world knows Pamela Anderson for her work in *Playboy*, running down the beaches of *Baywatch* and later emphasis on animal activism. Like Pam & Tommy rightly points out, Anderson should never have been defined by her consensually developed image that teetered on the socially sexual. If it weren’t for the vague lack of consent, there’s a chance that Pamela could actually have approved of the series’ supposed messaging. Alongside a second sex tape that never made it into public hands, she co-authored a *Wall Street Journal* article calling for a renewed education into pornography. Yet, Anderson’s



wellbeing falls back into the hands of men, who have defined every part of her life.

The new societal standpoint is that no one is owed the details of someone else's trauma. Even so, through movies like *Bombshell* and shows such as *Euphoria*, female trauma never gets that same break on screens. In almost every scripted case, a character who isn't a cis-man will experience negative ramifications from expressions of sexuality—consensual or not. It's unlikely that a narrative won't follow the pitfalls of digital blackmail, cultural shaming or an imprinted legacy that won't shift (with the exception of *Fleabag*).

Unsurprisingly, *Pam & Tommy* has all of the above traits. Off the back of money and male ego, exercising the “God given right to free expression” means the series ultimately falls into the trap it's trying to denounce. Through a lens of head vs. heart vs. dick, Pamela's image is playing into parts the script warns her Lily James-ed version away from. The fictional portrayal of Anderson is certainly empathetic—uncomfortably heart-wrenching in moments of solitude she steals for herself. However, saying no to a room full of men is never fully realised under the hold of the patriarchy, the pain of which seeps through into real life consequences.

Cancelled or Correct?

As social media calls for a boycott of the show altogether, its mere existence poses a number of questions. Does it teach us anything new? Not really. Does the show drive forward a singular, hard-hitting stance? Nothing that's too

strong. Could there have been a fictionalised version of crafty pornheads leaking content that creates a social deterrent? Very possibly. What is certain, however, is that somewhere there is a woman watching the world reliving her trauma, and there's nothing she can do about it.

Although the wider ramifications of *Pam & Tommy* are unknown, it's likely that a certain type of viewer will immediately question if the cursed tape is still available. Media outlets have already stirred up renewed interest in the celebrity sex tape, while the show's detailing of miscarriages and nods to other celebrity breakdowns feel like an incredibly low blow. While inadvertently becoming a “trainwreck by association”, Pamela Anderson is undoubtedly the only person who can truly tell her story—if she so chooses. Exploring nothing other than the sad, misogynistic reality we already know, *Pam & Tommy* is problematic conjecture at best. Almost surprising, for a series that heavily concentrates on the importance of release forms. **U**



The Magic of Pixar Films

WORDS: JED WAGMAN

A

fter the last two Pixar films *Luca* and *Soul* skipped cinemas to go straight to Disney+,

the latest from the animation studio, *Turning Red*, a film about a teen girl who turns into a giant red panda when she gets too stressed or excited, will also be missing cinemas and available to watch exclusively on Disney+ from March 11th. But what is it about every single Pixar film that makes them so compelling? Why do we love Pixar films so much?

One of the reasons why all of Pixar's films work so well because they all create complex, intelligent and likeable main characters that you can't help but fall in love with. Whether that's the adorable robots WALL-E and EVE, Woody and Buzz from *Toy Story*, Miguel in *Coco* or any one of the vast array of wonderful characters created by the animation studio, they are all

fascinating, complex and layered characters that have so much to offer.

But what's even greater is that a large number of these characters aren't even human characters. Pixar make us think, what if toys had feelings? What if cars had feelings? What if even our own feelings had feelings? Whilst many of their protagonists are humans (*Brave*, *The Incredibles...*), they also make us care about monsters and bugs and rats and fish and so many other creatures that we would never expect to love so much and Pixar show us the wonder of these creatures. Every single time they just fill these characters with such sharp emotions and so much character that they just jumps right off the screen.

It's easy to forget that the first twenty minutes or so of *WALL-E* have almost no spoken dialogue, or how the opening montage of *Up*, also features no dialogue and yet within such a short time span and without any dialogue, Pixar have

already made us so intrigued in these characters. Within the first few minutes of *Up* they've already got us sobbing because there is so much depth to these characters.

In just a few minutes we've witnessed Carl and Ellie's entire lives and they feel like real people that we've known for years. And yet they are only characters in a film we've been watching for a few minutes. In a matter of minutes Pixar have created such a strong bond between us and their characters that they feel like so much more than just characters in a film. Time and time again the studio have brought such wonderful characters to life, and they present them with such depth and charm. Every single one of their films has a main character, or characters, that are so incredibly rich and help draw us into the world of the film.

One other hugely important thing that Pixar films offer is that they present adult themes in a kid friendly matter. This is one of the things that makes their films



so entertaining and engaging for people of all ages. They provide valuable life lessons to kids, and to adults alike, without anything seeming too difficult to understand.

One of the brilliant ways Pixar does this is through the way that the films end. Whilst they all have nice endings, none of them have the happy ending you think they'll have. One hugely important lesson that Pixar teaches us is that life doesn't always turn out the way we dream but that's okay. At the end of the film, the toys don't go to college with Andy in *Toy Story 3*, Joe Gardner from *Soul* realises that there's more to life than finding our spark and we should cherish each and every moment of our life. Mike and Sulley get expelled from university, Gusteau's restaurant gets closed down in *Ratatouille*. You wouldn't have wanted any of these to happen at the start of the film, and yet by the time these events happen it's what's right for the characters at the moment of the film and at the moment of their journey. And the same is true

in our own lives, what you might think you want at one point in your life might not necessarily be what you want a couple of years down the line. Nor might it be the right choice for your life. It's through the amazing characters that Pixar have crafted that they are able to perfectly execute this message that it's alright if things don't go to plan and the way that we want everything to. That might not be what's right for us even if we think it is.

Pixar manage to fill these 'kids films' with so many complex themes about life and distil them down into their simplest form. Even though the ending of *Toy Story 3* may leave you bawling your eyes out, it is still a happy ending. All of Pixar's films have happy endings. Woody, Buzz and the gang sit playing with Bonnie, getting to experience the joys of being played with once again whilst they watch Andy drive away to college as a man who's matured thanks to his toys. Andy no longer needs them, but the toys are there to watch

him progress to the next stage of his life. Even though Ian doesn't get to meet his father in *Onward*, the quest he's taken has brought out the father-figure in his brother Barley and it's brought them closer together. And it's taught us that we don't need magic to get what we want, there are very real means that we can take that will bring us the same outcome, but we just might not always know where to look for it.

These films have so much to offer us and to teach us about life and Pixar joyously brings this all to fruition through their remarkable characters. In fact, they're not characters. Woody, Jessie, Luca, Dory, McQueen, Héctor, Remy, none of them are film characters, they're far more than that. They're our friends and they'll always be there for us. **1**

**TURNING RED IS AVAILABLE ON
DISNEY+ FROM MARCH 11TH**

EVANGELINE LILLY TALKS SOUTH OF HEAVEN

C

anadian actress
Evangeline
Lilly might
still be best
known for her
role as scream
enthusiast

and smoke monster avoider Kate Austen in the hit show *Lost*, but her career has pretty much gone from strength to strength. Following a 2007 Golden Globe nomination for the show she had a supporting role in Kathryn Bigelow's Oscar winning war drama *The Hurt Locker* before landing roles in mega franchises *The Hobbit* and the Marvel Cinematic Universe where she plays Tauriel and Hope van Dyne/The Wasp respectively. Her most recent film, *South of Heaven* is an altogether smaller scale affair, part neo-western, part love story which sees her on screen opposite Ted Lasso himself Jason Sudeikis. Filmhounds caught up with her to discuss the film.

This seems like a change of pace for you, the last few things

audiences have seen you in have had superheroes, elves, robots punching each other in the face. Is it refreshing to jump into something a bit more grounded and human?

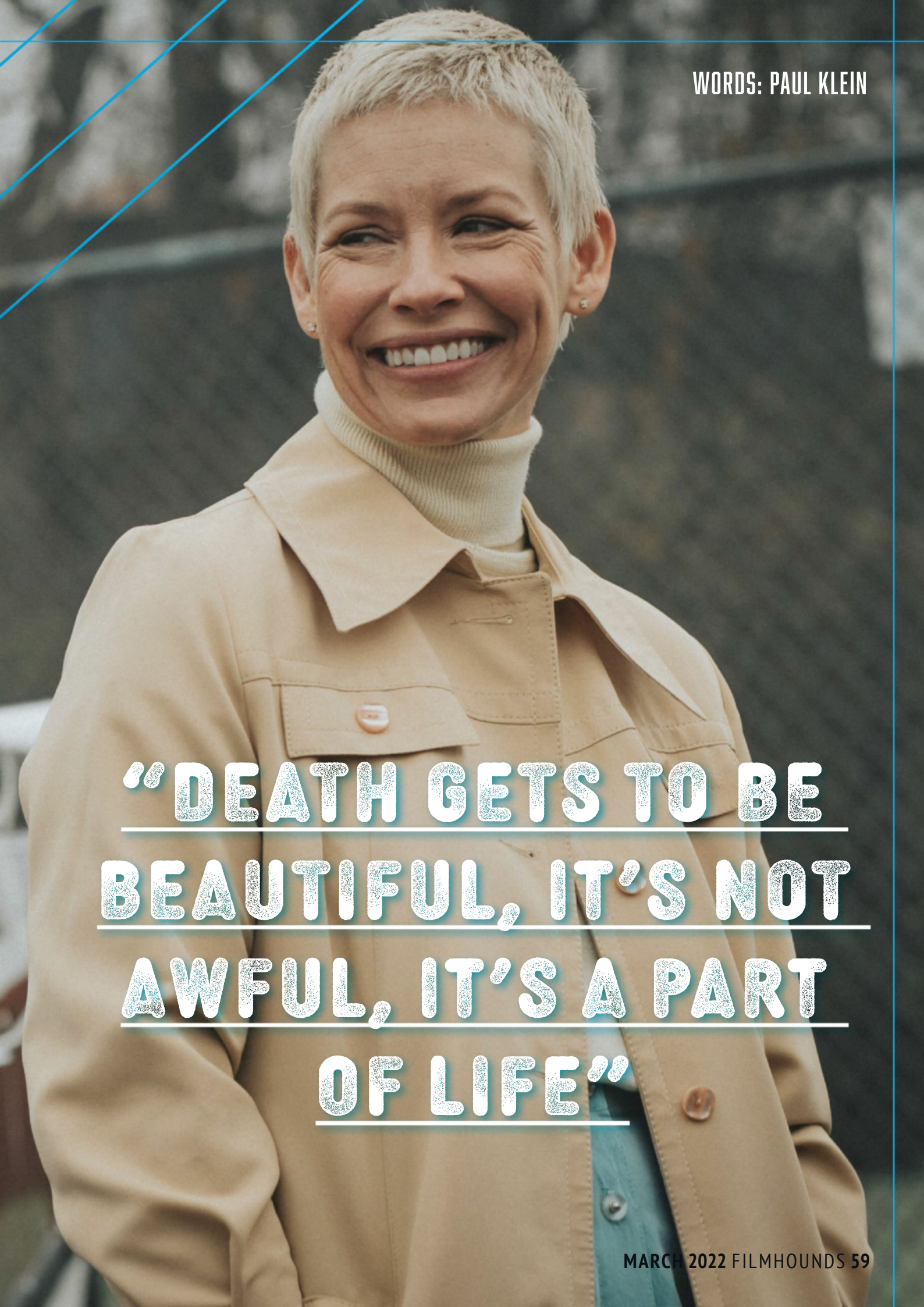
So refreshing, it was just what the doctor ordered. I needed it so badly. I think that's one of the main reasons I wanted to play Annie. I wanted to be able to walk into a scene and instead of having to amp myself up, and getting all intense and doing press-ups to get my sweat on, and all this stuff you have to do to create one of these crazy CGI scenes. Just like take a big deep breath, calm my soul and put a smile on my face and go say some words with a really good person opposite me. That was a treat. It was like - this isn't work. I would do this for free.

Your character Annie is suffering from the later stages of terminal lung cancer, what sort of

research do you do for that or do you let the words speak for themselves?

I guess it would depend on the project, because every project's different. This one wasn't hyper realistic. We wanted to create a space that was suspended in time, and a little bit of a suspension of reality. There were different visual cues we used. You could tell that Aharon [Keshales, the director] wasn't aiming for *The Squid and the Whale*. It was more in the ballpark of Wes Anderson, or a Roy Anderson film, or the Russo brothers. It's a stylised film.

So, I said to Aharon - you have to guide me. Do you want to see her cancer, do you want to hear her cancer? Do you want me hacking shit up out of my lungs, with black circles around my eyes and pale skin? What is the version of Annie? What is the representation of a woman facing death that you want to see on screen?

A woman with short, blonde hair is smiling warmly at the camera. She is wearing a light-colored turtleneck sweater under a tan, button-up jacket. The background is a blurred outdoor setting. The image is framed by a thin blue border on the right and top edges, with diagonal blue lines in the top left corner.

WORDS: PAUL KLEIN

**“DEATH GETS TO BE
BEAUTIFUL, IT’S NOT
AWFUL, IT’S A PART
OF LIFE”**



And the thing that Aharon wanted to do, which I thought was really beautiful, was to stylistically at the centre of the film - who is dying - to represent life. To represent sunlight. To represent all that is good, and whole, and okay in the world. So, while he wanted you to feel her vulnerability he didn't want her to look sick and dying. So we know she is in our minds, and we can't quite resolve that with what we know of her situation. It opens you up to a place where anything can happen, and then you open up to possibility. What Annie represents is the possibility that even as you're facing death you can be full of life.

I think it speaks to a lot of people's experiences of people at the end of their life. They're not as miserable as film's make out. They generally have a good sense of humour about it. It can be off putting.

I agree. You know, first hand experience with cancer patients. There was also a beautiful blogger I was following while researching this film who was battling lung cancer. She was in late stages while doing these blogs. And she was the most macabre, self-deprecating, hilarious ball of joy and life, but she'd have these times where she showed that anger, darkness, and all that

wrapped into one. I followed her, and read her blogs, because I felt that was the closest I was going to come to a real life Annie.

There's a scene in the film, not to give anything away, where someone meets a grisly end via a knife and some cake. Do you find that intense drama often lends itself to humour?

I think it should. That's my favourite type of drama. I love macabre humour, I love dark humour, that's why I wanted to do this film. Aharon had done this film back in Israel called *Big Bad Wolves*, it's a masterclass in macabre humour. It's harrowing.

The topic he's dealing with is a pedophilic mass murderer is on the loose. I was like, hell no I'm not watching this. This is way outside of my comfort zone, I can't stomach that kind of stuff. But, I was like I'll watch it until I can't stomach it because I need to see what this guy does, and I kept watching and kept watching and I never hit that limit of "I can't watch this" because he has such a way of knowing when to make things funny, when to make things serious, and when to make things that are gory so beautiful visually. I think the way he showed that side of humanity is - he's a bit of a genius in that way. I think he does it really well in this film as well.

Everything that is gory is beautiful, and everything that is dark is light. Let them eat cake!

Maybe not that cake. I thought it looked nice until someone had an unfortunate encounter with it.

We did so many takes of that scene and the whole time I was thinking - that cake looks so good, I want a bite. In the end we had two extras, and I had them bring me some.

At one point your character discusses what song she wants played at her funeral, *The Beach Boys* comes up, have you ever thought which song you'd choose?

For a funeral?! God no. I've never thought about it. Frankly, I can't wrap my head around being dead. I'm young still. It feels like it's a really long way away, I'll start thinking about that in the eighties, maybe in the sixties I'll start to get really sick, and think about it more. But, what I love is that when she does think about it, that she has such a macabre sense of humour. It's such a realistic scene.

I feel when I watch such heavy drama and people don't crack jokes in the most serious moments of their lives I feel like - who doesn't? Who doesn't crack jokes? Who doesn't fuck around?

Funerals are very funny, more so than weddings, I think.

Are you a fan of *The Royle Family*?

I'm British, of course I am!

That funeral scene is a realistic funeral scene! That's real. Death gets to be beautiful, it's not awful, it's a part of life. It's a beautiful part of life. We all have to deal with it, and the only way we can make peace with it, is through humour. We have to be able to laugh at that.

During the lockdowns when things were closed, people revisited a lot of TV series. Were you tempted to revisit *Lost*?

I've been tempted, but I haven't given in to temptation. You know what I have been watching as we speak, and it's insane because it's right in my era so I have no excuse of not watching it on the first go around. But, for the first time ever I'm watching *Friends*. For the first time ever. From the first episode to the last.

You've never watched *Friends*?

No. I've seen a couple of episodes, maybe three or four episodes but not all of them in order.

That's quite shameful.

It's shocking, isn't it?

Especially since you work with Paul Rudd. Does he know? He's going to be very upset.

How mad were people that he wasn't at the reunion thing? People were furious.

Anytime Paul Rudd can be in something, Paul Rudd should be in something.

I was right there with everyone, and I've not seen it. Why wasn't Paul there?

Speaking of Paul Rudd, it's *Wasp-mode for you next, have you watched the Disney+ series*, do you know what's going on in the universe?

I'm trying to keep up. There is a lot of content. I've seen *Loki*. I've seen *WandaVision*. I have not seen... a lot.

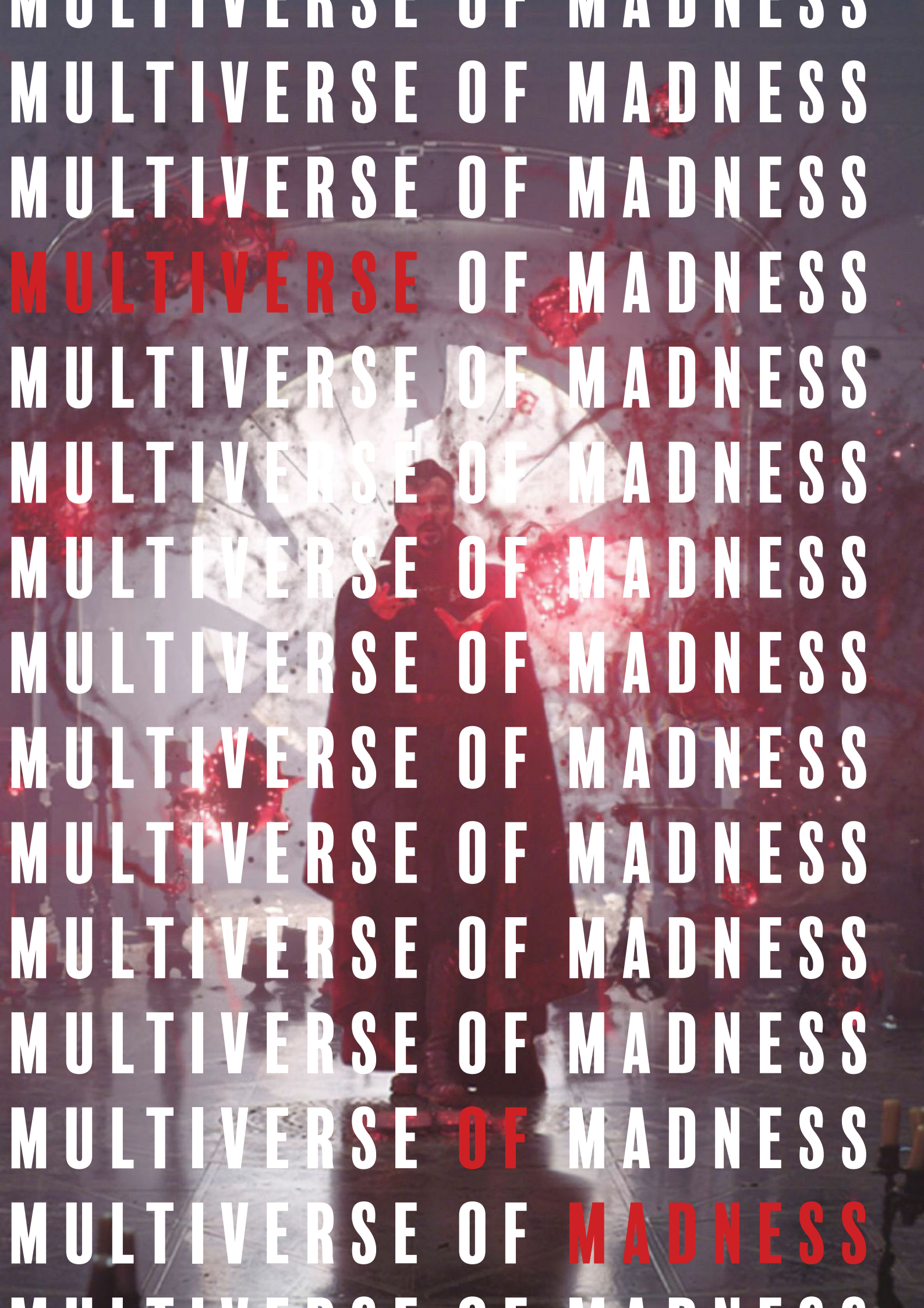
***Loki* ties into yours, so that's preparation for a role.**

I actually watched *Loki* while making *Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania*. On my days off I binged it with my family.

Did you get Michael Douglas to watch it? I saw he had no idea what was going on when he made the second film.

Oh, no. Him and Michelle [Pfeiffer] have no idea. They're like "there's a blue guy?" He's such a baller, that guy. He's like "tell me where to stand". He's amazing. But, I think we really made the best one, my gut says we did. But, I've only seen fifty percent of the film, the other half get's done in post. It was the most challenging, but I think it's going to be the best one. **1**

South Of Heaven is available now



MULTIVERSE OF MADNESS
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EVERYTHING WE KNOW ABOUT DOCTOR STRANGE IN THE MADNESS OF MULTIVERSE



art of the grand appeal of Marvel's superhero movies is also that of their comic-book

counterparts – namely, getting to see your favourite characters join in on the action in-between their own solo outings. After making notable appearances in *Avengers: Infinity War*, 2021's *What If...?* series, and, most recently, *Spider-Man: No Way Home*, Stephen Strange finally returns in his very own sequel. The 28th entry in the ever-expanding Marvel Cinematic Universe, *Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness* has arguably become the most anticipated film in Marvel's packed upcoming slate – no mean feat when it's in the company of Taika Waititi's *Thor: Love and Thunder* and Ryan Coogler's *Black Panther* sequel.

After the loss of Tony Stark and Steve Rogers as franchise figureheads, Stephen Strange (Benedict Cumberbatch) has evolved into something of a mature father figure within the

MCU, exhibiting a grasp on his increasingly bizarre world that others could not comprehend. Strange may be a master of the mystic arts, but there are things that remain unknown to even him, chief among them, the multiverse.

With events in *WandaVision*, *What If...?*, *Loki* and *No Way Home* all impacting the fabric of space and time, it's up to Doctor Strange to delve into the multiverse, bring order to the madness, and save reality itself. While details are under tight wraps, here's everything we know about Strange's next adventure...

STRANGE NEW DIRECTION

Marvel have traded one horror maestro for another after creative differences led Doctor Strange and Sinister director Scott Derrickson to leave the production. In his place is Sam Raimi who is no stranger to comic-book fare after helming all three entries in Tobey Maguire's *Spider-Man* series. With initial reports describing it as "Marvel's horror film", Raimi's involvement seems to confirm that Doctor

Strange's next adventure will indeed be a frightening one, putting the *Evil Dead* director's experience in the genre to good use. With that vast multiverse at his disposal, expect to see B-movie legend Bruce Campbell and his trademark Oldsmobile pop up.

SORCERER SUPREME NO MORE

Among the many surprises in *Spider-Man: No Way Home* was the revelation that Strange no longer holds the status of Sorcerer Supreme after being blipped out of existence for 5 years. Instead, the mantle fell to fellow wizard and guardian of the New York Sanctum, Wong (Benedict Wong), who seems to be firmly holding on to the position. This new dynamic should make for some fun rivalry between the sorcerers, but there is always a high chance that Strange could reclaim the title by the film's end.

GARGANTOS OR SHUMA-GORATH?

MULTIVERSE OF MADNESS



As glimpsed in the film's first trailer, Strange will be facing off against a colossal, one-eyed being unleashed upon New York City. While initially speculated to be the Lovecraftian entity Shuma-Gorath, further merchandising has confirmed the creature to be Gargantos. Or is it? While Gargantos is a sea-monster little seen outside of a handful of Marvel comics, it shares a distinctive, tentacled look akin to the much more prominent Shuma-Gorath, a name used elsewhere in Conan the Barbarian comics and the source of a potential licensing dispute. Armed with powers of mind-control and interdimensional destruction, the enormous demon has been plaguing Doctor Strange since the early 70s. Whether this take on Gargantos is inspired by Shuma-Gorath or not, Marvel's embrace of Doctor Strange's fantastical eldritch elements herald an even more exciting visual direction for the series to go in.

MASTER OF THE MUSICAL ARTS

With Raimi comes his frequent collaborator Danny Elfman, taking over musical score duties from Michael Giacchino. Elfman is a master when it comes to dark, unconventional themes, so we can expect grand orchestral movements

to accompany the sure-to-be-awesome visuals, but how much of Giacchino's established Strange score is kept remains to be seen (or heard). Elfman previously took over the scores for both *Avengers: Age of Ultron* and Joss Whedon's cut of *Justice League*, adapting the motifs of the former but completely scrapping and redoing the themes of the latter. Whatever musical inventions Elfman comes up with, hopefully Strange's baroque theme remains.

AMERICA CHAVEZ

Joining Strange and co. on their quest through the multiverse is Marvel's latest addition to their cinematic roster, America Chavez

(Xochitl Gomez). Chavez is a young superhero with powers of super strength, durability, and flight. Oh, and she can also open star-shaped portals into other dimensions and realities – a useful skill when trying to repair the multiverse...

The Latin-American Chavez also adds a further touch of diversity to Marvel's growing cast of characters as their first openly gay superhero. Providing some much needed representation, Chavez's future in the MCU looks to be a bright one as she has been known to team up with Kate Bishop (recently seen in Disney+'s *Hawkeye* series) and Cassie Lang (slated to appear again in 2023's *Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania*).

THREE TIMES AS STRANGE

Putting Cumberbatch's thespian training to the test, the English actor will be portraying at least three variants of his Marvel character. It seems the Doctor Strange we know will be facing off against a darker version of himself – a similar story to the Strange-centric *What If...?* episode. In that tale, a grief-stricken Strange seeks to reverse death itself by absorbing



the powers of the universe's greatest creatures. Though this iteration was later given his redemption by the series' end, it remains unclear as to whether or not Cumberbatch will be portraying a live-action version of the character or a variation inspired by the corrupt sorcerer.

Also confirmed is Doctor Strange as leader of a new form of superhero group the Defenders. The Defenders were previously portrayed on the Netflix series of the same name, featuring

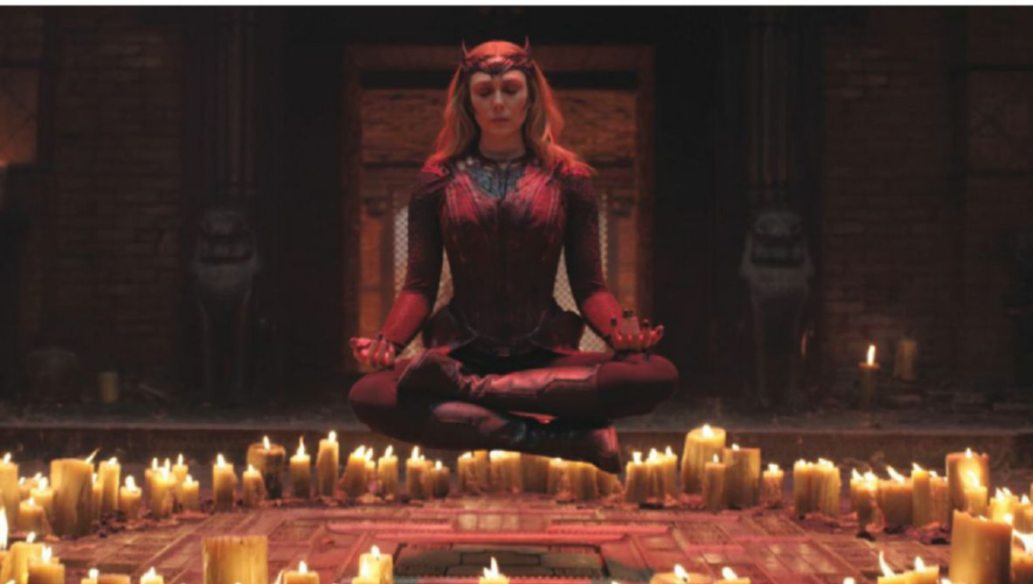
Doctor Strange will have his hands full as Chiwetel Ejiofor returns as friend-turned-foe Karl Mordo. Mordo was last seen in the post-credits scene of 2016's *Doctor Strange* stealing other sorcerers' magic in an effort to eradicate as many magic-users from the world as he can, having abandoned the Ancient One's (Tilda Swinton) teaching. It looks like Mordo's crusade against sorcerers is set to continue as he tells Strange "the greatest threat to our universe is you."

output to resounding acclaim, we find a secluded Wanda being enlisted by Strange to aid him in his journey to restore reality. But with more than a lifetime's worth of pain behind her, and unstable chaos-magic coursing through her fingertips, it seems more likely that the former Avenger will embrace her destiny as the deadly Scarlett Witch. With Wanda becoming such a fan-favourite, it may be hard to choose a side should these two sorcerers do battle.

CAMEOS

Marvel seem to pride themselves on their easter eggs and cameos, and anyone who has attended a packed screening of one of their films can see why. Anyone walking by screenings of *Spider-Man: No Way Home* could hear the endless cheers and shows of excitement as fan-favourites appeared on the screen once again. *Multiverse of Madness* looks set to continue the trend on an even grander scale, potentially pulling in faces from Marvel's cinematic history, either in new iterations or played by the actors who first brought them to the big screen. With Wanda's connection to the X-Men, rumours abound that we may yet see Charles Xavier or Wolverine again, and with all the reality-hopping going on, is this the perfect way to officially introduce Ryan Reynolds' Deadpool to the mix?

As each entry of the MCU is shrouded in secrets and mystery, fans of the series can but wait to see what Kevin Feige and co. have in store for us. With the sequel pushed back to a May 2022 release date, it seems we have even more time to speculate what paths *Doctor Strange* will follow as he traverses the multiverse. As the first film's tagline once said, "the impossibilities are endless." 



Daredevil, however, over the years the group has seen the likes of Strange, the Incredible Hulk, Namor and Valkyrie join their ranks. Fans were given their first glimpse of this incarnation of Strange via the Marvel Legends action figures, showing the character in a new, comic-accurate, black and red costume, with a lengthy ponytail. With a new Defenders group appearing, and many fan-pleasing cameos being teased, we can only speculate as to which characters, new or old, are part of the team.

MORE MORDO

Throughout his history in comic-books, Mordo has been Strange's arch-enemy. Even if Mordo is revealed not to be *Multiverse of Madness*'s main villain, the film will no doubt poise him as a dangerous adversary for Strange to face again in the future.

THE WITCH IS BACK

Strange, Wong and Mordo won't be the only magic-users galivanting around the multiverse, of course, as Elizabeth Olsen's Wanda Maximoff makes her way back to the big screen. After kicking off Marvel's new wave of televisual

JOHN WILLIAMS

John Williams at 90:

A Celebration

WORDS: CALLUM BARRINGTON



Music has long been an important part of filmmaking. From the early days of silent cinema, it

has been used to create emotion in place of dialogue, add to the suspense of a vital set piece or stir the heart in times of triumph. There have been many successful and revered composers in the history of cinema, from Ennio Morricone to John Barry, from Alexandre Desplat to Hans Zimmer.

Arguably the most beloved and influential composer of all time is John Williams, who celebrates his 90th birthday in February this year. Over the course of a near sixty-year career, he has been responsible for some of the most influential movie scores in cinema, whether epic, sweeping operatic tones, to quieter, more reflective pieces. Ask any casual cinemagoer to name five film scores, and chances are Williams will have composed most of them. He's as much of a celebrity as the countless actors he's composed music for, and the many, many directors he has worked with over the years.

STUDYING MUSIC

Williams' early life reveals his love of music. Born in New York City on 8th February 1932, his father Johnny was a jazz drummer and percussionist, he played piano whist serving in the Air Force in the 1950s and studied at the Juilliard School, originally hoping to become a concert pianist, before changing to composition. Upon returning to Los Angeles, he worked as an orchestrator at film studios, studying for the likes of Franz Waxman, Bernard Hermann and Alfred Newman. Further collaborations occurred with Jerry Goldsmith, Henry Mancini and both Leonard and Elmer Bernstein. All of these very successful individual composers would become influences on Williams' later career, and in many cases, he would be nominated alongside them at various award shows over the years.

EARLY HOLLYWOOD CAREER

Williams' style of music can be described as 'neoromantic', inspired by 19th century orchestral music from the Romanticism period. It's the sort of music that is operatic in scope and heavy in emotion and feeling. He made his film scoring debut with 1958's *Daddy-O*, but wouldn't be credited on-screen until 1960's *Because*

They're Young. Throughout the 1960s, his combination of jazz, piano and symphony saw him create music for a variety of films of different genres, including war (*None but the Brave*, 1965), Westerns (*The Rare Breed*, 1966), comedy (*Not With My Wife You Don't*, 1966) and thrillers (*Daddy's Gone A' Huntin'*, 1969).

He earned the first of his 52 Academy Award nominations for *Valley of the Dolls* in 1967 and became one of the most sought-after young composers in Hollywood. Williams's 60s work isn't quite as famous as his later efforts, perhaps because there isn't a 'standout' among them, but it's important in the evolution of his career.

Echoes of what he would later go on to earn huge success with can be traced back to some of his scores from this period. In many cases, his music is used as a replacement for dialogue, creating the required translation to the audience without them having to be bombarded with a lot of exposition. He essentially turns into a secondary storyteller.

THE 70S: SPIELBERG, STAR WARS AND SUPERMAN

By far the most important and vital period of Williams' career is the 1970s. It's in this decade that his two most enduring partnerships were formed. Having earned his first Oscar win for adapting the music for *Fiddler on the Roof* (1971), Williams became more in demand than ever, scoring ten films in the period 1972-1973 (these included *The Poseidon Adventure*, one of his most underrated scores).

In 1974, he was approached by a young, dynamic filmmaker to compose the music for his feature film debut, *The Sugarland Express*. That director was Steven Spielberg, who a year later asked him back to do another film, this time a simple little shark thriller called *Jaws* (1975). Suddenly, Williams' career exploded. His brilliant, forebodingly sinister main theme has become a classic of suspense cinema, a rising, terrifying dread that signals approaching, instant danger.

Williams' insistence that the theme would work despite Spielberg's disbelief paid off, as he won his second Oscar and turned almost instantly into the leading figure of film music. *Jaws* is in itself a masterpiece but watching it without Williams' music is a strange and entirely unsettling experience- it feels like an entirely different movie. Williams later claimed the film kickstarted his career, allowing him the opportunity to expand his musical horizons. Since *Jaws*, Williams has worked with Spielberg on all but five films (*The Twilight Zone: The Movie* (1982), *The Color Purple* (1985), *Bridge of Spies* (2015) *Ready Player One* (2018)

and 2021's *West Side Story*- although he did provide an uncredited assistance on the soundtrack, and previously served as the pianist on the original film in 1961)

Of course, Williams' relationship with Spielberg has been enduring, but the work for which he will surely be remembered more than any other is the contributions he has made to one particular series in particular- *Star Wars*. Since 1977, when that triumphant main theme blasted out of cinema stereos to accompany the opening crawl of George Lucas' sci-fi classic, Williams has provided the soundtrack to all nine films in the Skywalker Saga and has produced some utterly breath-taking music.

Cantina Band is joyfully silly. The Imperial March gives Darth Vader recognition whenever he appears on-screen. Duel of the Fates gets the blood going as Obi-Wan and Qui-Gon battle Darth Maul. Battle of the Heroes plays out as master and apprentice do battle on the volcanic planet Mustafar. Whenever *Star Wars* needs its music, Williams delivers. There has arguably never been a more perfect fit of composer and movie. Just as Williams will forever be associated with a galaxy far, far away, so too will *Star Wars* never escape Williams' influence.

In 1978, Richard Donner brought the Man of Steel to the big screen, with stars including Marlon Brando and Gene Hackman working alongside newcomer Christopher Reeve to make Superman, the first true superhero film. Riding high on the success of *Star Wars*, Williams stepped in to replace Jerry Goldsmith as composer for the

film, employing the London Symphony Orchestra to help him.

Superman is arguably Williams' biggest success outside of Spielberg and *Star Wars*. The main theme, a soaring, majestic, sweeping introduction to the hero, opens the story with a bang. 'Can You Read My Mind?' is a beautiful love theme that highlights the growing romance between Clark and Lois Lane. 'The Fortress of Solitude' emphasises intrigue and mystery as Clark hears his father's message.

Williams sadly never returned to score any of Superman's sequels, but his indelible imprint on the franchise makes it impossible to imagine the character without his music (why was it ignored in *Man of Steel*?)

20th Century Studios, Walt Disney Studios- John Williams conducts the orchestra during the scoring session for *Star Wars: A New Hope* (1977)

MATURITY AND CONTINUING SUCCESS

After the enormously successful 70s, Williams continued his contribution to Spielberg and Lucas into the 80s, starting with his masterful return to the *Star Wars* universe with *The Empire Strikes Back* (still the best film and score of the saga). He helped Spielberg bring the benevolent visitor to life in *E.T. The Extra Terrestrial* (1982) and dovetailed their individual projects with a new one that brought the two together- Indiana Jones.

Once again, he dug deep into his

imagination and crafted another unforgettable tune, this time the 'Raiders March', which has become as synonymous with Indy as his hat and whip. He carried a darker edge into the follow-up, *Temple of Doom* (1984) and lent a playful edge to *The Last Crusade* (1989). Sadly, his efforts on *Kingdom of the Crystal Skull* are as lacklustre as the film itself.

Most of Williams' output as he reached his 50s were devoted to what he had done before, but he did branch out to other films, such as *Born on the Fourth of July*, which paired him up with Oliver Stone and began a run of films that were mature in content, forcing him to restructure his work ethic.

Examples include *Presumed Innocent* (1990), *JFK* (1991 - this score is excellent, both perversely invasive and strangely compelling), and, most notably, *Schindler's List* (1993), an emotionally exhausting, utterly draining experience that so overwhelmed Williams he at one point felt he couldn't score the film. He was rightly rewarded with his fifth (and, thus far, final) Oscar.

Williams balanced these excursions to the dark side with *Home Alone* (1990), the Christmas staple that features some lovely, ethereal music as Kevin takes on the burglars in his home. *Jurassic Park* (1993) saw him return to the blockbuster style of music he'd made his name with in his early career. He would also bring romance to *Sabrina* (1995), suspicion to *Nixon* (1995) and Asian aesthetic to *Seven Years in Tibet* (1997), as well as returning to the world of *Star Wars* with *The Phantom Menace* (1999).

The 90s was a decade of real growth from Williams. Now in his 60s, he was just as capable of driving his audience to tears as he

was at getting them to cheer from the rooftops. At this point, he was shaping the careers of other composers as well, in particular Danny Elfman, who like Williams, frequently worked with the same directors and composed a memorable theme for a superhero - in Elfman's case, *Batman*.

NEW MILLENNIUM, NEW WILLIAMS

As the new Millennium dawned, Williams was as in demand as ever. After stepping in to David Arnold's place on *The Patriot* (2000), he teamed up once again with Chris Columbus, who needed someone to give life to his film adaptation of J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (2001).

Williams, enchanted by the book, duly obliged, delivering yet another timeless piece, 'Hedwig's Theme', which appeared in all eight Potter films. He returned for Columbus' *Chamber of Secrets* (2002) and remained on board when Alfonso Cuarón took over for *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (2004).

With a new director, and a story that was beginning to take a deeper turn, Williams regained his groove. His score for *Prisoner of Azkaban* is superb. It's atmospheric when the stakes are raised, melancholic when the emotions are stirred and thrilling when the action kicks in. The highlight is 'Window to the Past', a haunting theme played with harps that mournfully follows Harry and Lupin's conversation about Harry's parents. It's an atypical Williams album yet remains the best work he has done this century. Sadly, scheduling conflicts caused him to step aside for the next film, ending his association with the Boy Who Lived. Once again, though, his legacy on

the series continued.

In both 2002 and 2005, Williams scored four films. Standouts from these two years include *Catch Me if You Can* (2002), a criminally overlooked Mancini-flavoured composition that is jazzy and intimate, a pulse-pounding, goosebump raising flavour for *War of the Worlds* (2005), the moody undertones of *Munich* (2005), his epic, awe-inspiring efforts for *Revenge of the Sith* (2005) and the Oriental sounds of *Memoirs of a Geisha* (2005).

This busy period was soon followed by an unexpected dormancy, as Williams remained very quiet after Indiana Jones' fourth adventure in 2008. Had he finally decided to wind down after being practically overactive since the 1970s? Or had age caught up with him?

The answer, it seems, was a resounding no. Although he has noticeably slowed his input in the last decade, Williams hasn't entirely retired from the industry. *The Adventures of Tintin* (2011) was a return to form for his first animated film, as he combined boundless energy with a touching maturity, while WW1 adventure *War Horse* (2011) was saved from schmaltz by his talent. *Lincoln* (2012) may be a bit talky, but it gives Williams his chance to go full patriot.

Disney wisely chose to bring Williams back when they revived *Star Wars*, but there's a noticeable dip in his loyalty as the story progresses. Maybe as a sign of age, or a result of a lack of planning, there seems to be a bit of laziness on his part, particularly in the final film, *Rise of Skywalker* (2019), which lacks that memorable 'wow' factor. Nevertheless, it's refreshing that Disney recognised the effort

Williams has made with *Star Wars* over the years, and admirable that he stayed loyal to it for over forty years. There's not much on the horizon for Williams, apart from the fifth Indiana Jones film, and potentially Spielberg's next film, *The Fabelmans* (2022). Although, given how hard he's worked over the years, he's earned some quiet time.

When it comes to describing Williams' contribution to cinema, Steven Spielberg said it best: 'without John Williams, bikes don't really fly, nor do brooms in Quidditch matches. Nor do men in red capes. There is no force, dinosaurs do not walk the earth. We do not wonder, we do not weep, we do not believe'.

Williams has defined movie music for six decades. He has turned the impossible into the believable, the absurd into the sublime. He has crafted so many childhood memories for generations of people and the list of films he has put his name to are varied and impressive. Whether providing excitement and awe, or terror and fear, he has given us his all. There has never been, and never will be, anyone who can do it as good as John Williams. He's a master of his craft, and as he enters his tenth decade, he remains the benchmark to which every modern composer should hope to match. 

OVERLOOKED WORKS

To wrap up this celebration of John Williams, below are ten Williams scores that aren't as well known as they could be, yet represent the versatility Williams has shown throughout his career:

10. THE COWBOYS (1972)

Sweeping, heroic score that lends maturity and depth to a surprisingly effective John Wayne performance.

9. DRACULA (1979)

Eerie and foreboding, with an effective use of tension and suspense.

8. HOOK (1991)

Spielberg's outright worst film features a terrific score from Williams, who captures the sense of imagination in a way the movie never does.

7. THE FURY (1978)

A varied and emotive horror score that marks his only collaboration with Brian De Palma.

6. PRESUMED INNOCENT

A rare Williams score that remains quietly in the background, yet manages to convey the feeling of forbidden lust that drives the story.

5. THE LOST WORLD: JURASSIC PARK (1997)

Not a great sequel, but some of the most effective isolated themes of Williams' career.

4. MINORITY REPORT

Noirish and atmospheric, with a rich and complex thematic construction.

3. JFK

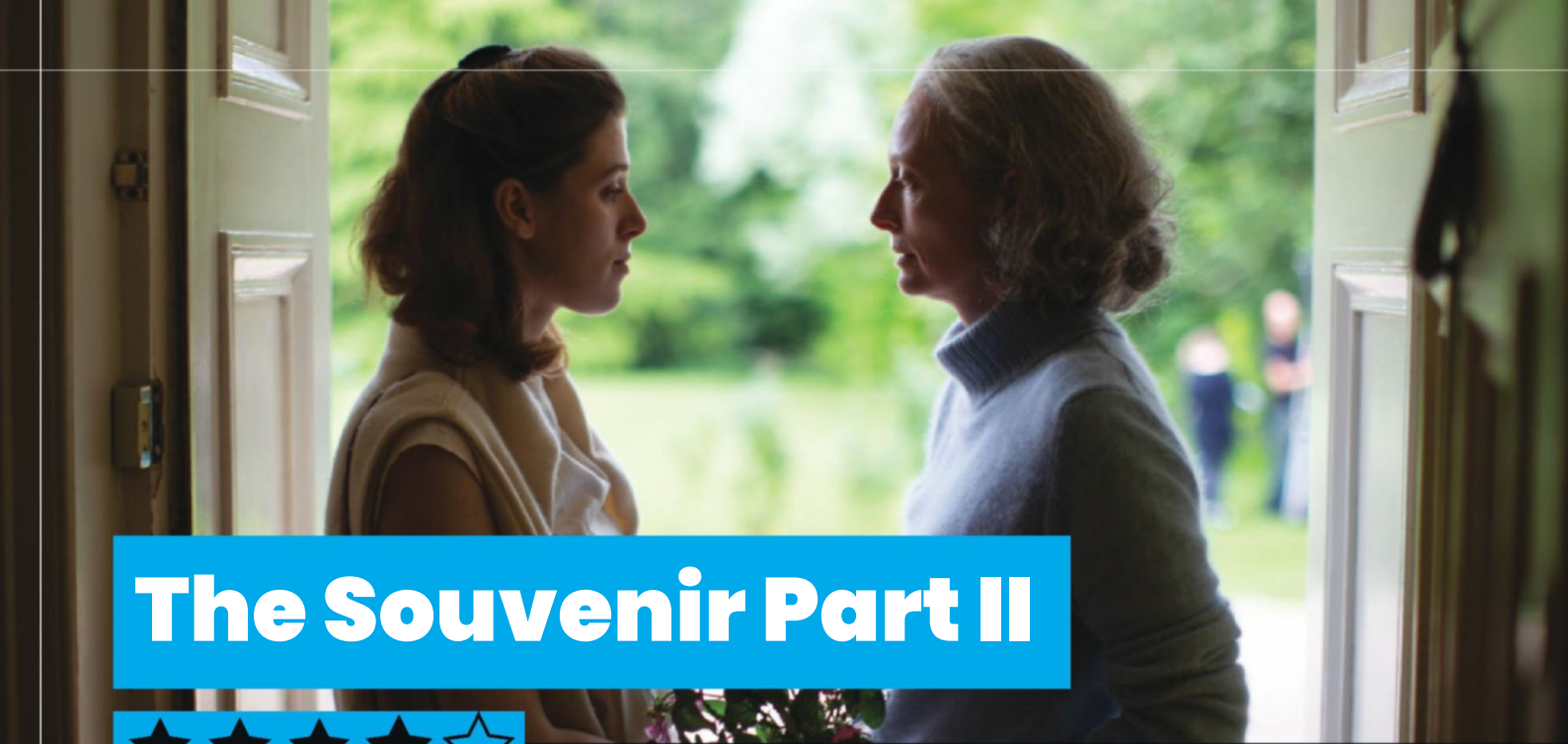
A powerful score that emphasises the paranoia and corruption present in the story.

2. CATCH ME IF YOU CAN

Jazzy, playful, and eminently hummable, Williams' tribute to the 60s is the perfect accompaniment to what may be Spielberg's most purely enjoyable movie.

1. THE ADVENTURES OF TINTIN

Indiana Jones for kids, Tintin features some truly wonderful Williams compositions, with the composer revitalised by the challenge of scoring his very first animated movie. Taken in isolation away from the film, it's joyful and soaring. It's Williams rediscovering the child in himself.



The Souvenir Part II



WORDS: MARIA LÄTTILÄ

Joanna Hogg's *The Souvenir* ended with a surprising note; it promised a Part II for a film no one expected a sequel to. The first film was critically acclaimed for the most part, but some critics and audiences, myself included, found it also deeply problematic in its portrayal of class and wealth. The film was brilliantly acted and Honor Swinton-Byrne, daughter of Tilda Swinton who also appears in the film, was a standout but the film asked for too much sympathy for someone with a rather comfortable life.

The film, which followed Swinton-Byrne's Julie, ended in tragedy as Julie's mysterious, slightly shady boyfriend Anthony (Tom Burke) was found dead, leaving Julie, a film student, devastated. Part II continues Julie's journey as a filmmaker trying to make sense of herself and her actions and mistakes through her graduation film. If you hated the first film, there is a strong chance you will love this one as it puts the first film in a whole different perspective, interrogating and questioning Julie's character.

The class element is still there and it continues to be the most problematic

and uncomfortable part of *The Souvenir Part II*. It's not addressed and Julie is still seen asking for money from her wealthy parents and living rather comfortably in her own flat, something no working class film student could ever afford. But Hogg's tighter focus on Julie's journey to find answers within herself is so much more intriguing and fascinating that it takes over and becomes the sole focus of the film.

This is also a film that is deeply enamored with filmmaking itself. Julie is a budding filmmaker, a student trying to find her artistic identity and her truth, but struggling with how much of herself she is pouring into her work and how vulnerable it leaves her. Her actors, portraying versions of Julie and Anthony, comment on how confusing their actions and emotions in the script, and by extension, in real life seem, further causing Julie heartbreak. Her emotional turmoil isn't just for the death of a person she loved, whom she didn't really know in the end, but her own actions, her own naivety and stupidity in the face of a toxic relationship. It's something any woman who looks back at a blatantly toxic romance. How did I let myself behave this way? Why did I stay? Why didn't I say something? Could I have changed the outcome of this if I spoke up?

Swinton Byrne is once again miraculous and luminous on screen.

Fragile, funny and self-reflective, it's an assured and complex performance from an actress with no other credits to her name, apart from a short cameo in *I Am Love*, which starred her mother Tilda. Richard Ayode turns in a memorable performance, full of wit, even if he is reduced to mostly a cameo. *The Souvenir Part II* is still perhaps a tad too long and a little on the pretentious side. While Julie's student film is the film's focus, there are things in the sidelines that aren't explored enough. Julie is seen throwing up; is this a sign of an eating disorder? An unwanted pregnancy? Julie mentions her period is late but is then later seen engaging in period sex with a casual encounter, played by *Stranger Things*' Charlie Heaton. He goes down on her and emerges with a blood-stained face, we then see the period-blood stained sheets and the image is somehow shockingly mundane and honestly, quite brilliant.

The Souvenir Part II isn't perfect, but it comes close. There are still questions about Hogg's treatment of class but the film succeeds as a sequel in a way films rarely do; it puts the first film into a different perspective and bravely questions the main character's actions. Swinton Byrne is simply wonderful and makes Julie relatable and much warmer than she was in the first film. This is almost brilliant filmmaking and one of the best British films of the year. **M**



Silver Bird and Rainbow Fish



WORDS: DAVID CUEVAS

F

or over a decade, Animator Lei Lei has repeatedly broken the boundaries and

expectations behind the culture of collage-animation. His work, as vibrant as his films can be, always exhibit a lingering dose of melancholy; an infused piece of personal resistance and commentary that foreshadows a darker cultural connotation. A personal favorite from his oeuvre is his hyperactive monument entitled 'Big Hands Oh Big Hands, Let It Be Bigger and Bigger', a satirical pop-art fantasy that utilizes the traditional mechanics of a propaganda film to a delirious fault. Around the same time, Lei Lei also collaborated with French-editor Thomas Sauvin; in an attempt to restore decades worth of photographs and lost families with his documentary 'Recycled'. In the same two year span, Lei Lei created two uniquely different short films, both self-aware in their social punches involving China's long withstanding political history against the Western view.

The majority of Lei Lei's work is subliminally political. His sophomore feature *Silver Bird and Rainbow Fish* is no exception. By far his most

blunt and personal film produced thus far, the feature is an articulated rumination on the importance of creating a dialogue within the confines of shared intergenerational trauma. The film is a cinematic excavation, assembled out of two audio interviews from close family members and their recollection of their life in Ningdu county. All engagement is brought to the foreground with *Silver Bird and Rainbow Fish's* animated excellence; a recontextualised storytelling device which effectively nestles center stage. As the slow-moving pace gently welcomes the viewer into the tactical story and legacy of Lei Lei's family, the animation quickly adapts to the harsh reality of the spoken word.

Technique is essential to the structural form, as clay figurines & cutout propaganda images provide symbolism and subtext. The weight of the cultural revolution is told through simile; often consumed by tragic images of impoverishment and separation. There's a great amount of focus on nature; both anthropological and zoological. In an attempt at providing rationality and forgiveness, the film confronts the misdeeds of the past with earnest brushstrokes of compassion. The visual metaphors of the great colorful fish and the tainted bird exist in *Silver Bird and Rainbow Fish's* universe to protect the memories

and identities of Lei Lei's remaining close family. So we, the viewer, are forced to naturally sit and observe; absorbing each word, each frame, with great diligence and respect.

In quieter moments of solitude and contemplation, *Silver Bird and Rainbow Fish* casually cogitates in timid loops; repeating didactic morals with little effect. Time passes, yet Lei Lei loses sight of the command of his interviews; in favor of additional visual subtext. Far from flawed, there's an occasional loss of pace due to a shift in focus. But at least the film never violates its initial promise; always caressing the viewer into a safe and welcoming environment. With injustice comes forgiveness. With the pressures of political power comes love. With cinema comes the preservation of heritage and the importance of meaningful storytelling.

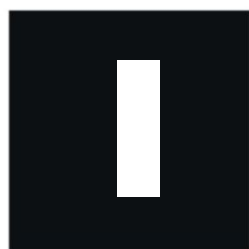




Fire of Love



WORDS: DAVID CUEVAS



n the beginning, there was a bang. The inception of the universe, an explosive expansion which

erupted the flickering existentialism of one's mortality. With a foundation to serve, life finally began. Erosion, metamorphosis, evolution, and death. This is home. An endless cycle. In the dew of ash and smog, there is light. Behold! The sizzling magma, a dainty sight of death-defying nature. In the remnants of the lava, abides the path of light. As we begin to fetish the volcanic debris in all of its celluloid glory, Sara Dosa summons the viewer an unconventional perspective on life and the profound acceptance of personal loss. In 'Fire of Love' — an unorthodox documentary about an unorthodox couple and their unorthodox professional methods — the film aptly examines lava as a visual metaphor for the attractive qualities of light. The light which radiates from the blazing abyss is a reproduction of our own fascination with the moving image. The glow of red volcanic activity is formed, where our eyes naturally integrate and find solace in the uncertainty of life & film. It's the thrill of the motion picture, the intoxicating withdrawal of Mother Nature's improbability which attracts us to find rationality in the head-scratching



blunder of modern science. Some things aren't meant to be kept secret.

Assembled and personified to match the pre-existing aesthetics of Jacques Cousteau's nature documentaries, renowned French New Wave cinema, and the sporadic experimentation of the Expo 67' multi-screen movement; Dosa's recount of obsessive compulsion and deep cinematic enamouration is a stunning achievement. Fire of Love is intoxicating, enlightening, and rousing by design; as quick cutting and rapid implementations of collage animation coincide with Miranda July's soothing narration. It takes time to fully adapt to the stimuli of Dosa's creative prowess, yet the welcoming text exudes brief flames of wisdom and introspection into the lives and desires of Katia & Maurice Kratt. The metaphors and narrative beats are genuine and intimate, as each exploration and expedition are distributed for a greater thesis.

The film can be adequately described as an intricately layered peer-reviewed

report; the first (great) early discovery of 2022 that occasionally fumbles with unattended repetition. Obsession — a thematic instigator frequently referenced in Fire of Love — is what defines us as human. Irony being, the obsessive narrative (by its own self-referential meta-text) is what causes initial obfuscation within the film's opening observations. It isn't until Dosa finds an even groove in the melodies of a tranquil lava flow, where the compulsion to explore and document relishes naturally. The beating core of Mother Earth radiates, and the soundtrack of our lives begins. Eno, Morricone, Chances. Tracks propel memories. Car wrecks, eruptions, and a plea for prevention. Cinema saves lives. Once returned in shrouded smog and romantic synchronicity, Dosa's love-letter to creation transforms into a radically human portrait of two lovers. In the end, they both hold hands, perishing from our planet doing what they loved most. And in the process, Dosa immortalizes their legacy for future generations to come. 



06:2022

Disney · PIXAR

QUIZ

As the next video game blockbuster, Uncharted, arrives in cinemas this month, see if you can Level Up with this quiz about the games that have exploded onto the big screen over the past few decades. Good luck!

QUIZMASTER: CHRIS GELDERD

- 1 WHO PLAYED GENERAL M BISON IN 1994'S 'STREET FIGHTER: THE MOVIE'?
- 2 IN WHAT YEAR DID BLOCKBUSTER MOVIE ADAPTION 'GOLDENEYE 007' RELEASE WORLDWIDE?
- 3 AS OF 2022, HOW MANY 'RESIDENT EVIL' FEATURE FILMS HAVE BEEN RELEASED?
- 4 ROBERT PATRICK STARRED AS EVIL KOGA SHUKO IN WHICH 1994 VIDEO GAME ADAPTATION?
- 5 WHO STARRED OPPOSITE ANGELINA JOLIE 'LARA CROFT: TOMB RAIDER - THE CRADLE OF LIFE'?
- 6 WHICH BLOCKBUSTER ROVIO MOBILE GAME HAS SPAWNED TWO ANIMATED FILMS?
- 7 IN 2018'S 'RAMPAGE', WHAT IS THE NAME OF THE MUTATED ALBINO GORILLA?
- 8 MICHAEL FASSBENDER FEATURED IN DUAL ROLES FOR WHICH 2016 ADAPTATION?
- 9 WHAT WAS THE FIRST EVER VIDEO GAME MOVIE ADAPTATION, THAT SADLY BOMBED UPON RELEASED IN 1993?
- 10 WE ALL KNOW SONIC AND TAILS, DUE TO BE SEEN IN 'SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 2', BUT WHAT IS TAIL'S FULL NAME?

THE EPIC CONCLUSION OF THE JURASSIC ERA





MARVEL STUDIOS

DOCTOR STRANGE
IN THE
MULTIVERSE OF MADNESS

IN CINEMAS SOON